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MR. CLUTTERBUCK'S ELECTION

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MR. CLUTTERBUCK'S ELECTION

BY

H. BELLOC

AUTHOR OF "EMANUEL BURDEN"

LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH
FAWSIDE HOUSE
1908

PR6003
E45 M58

To

GILBERT CHESTERTON

Idem Sentire de Republicâ . . .

MR. CLUTTERBUCK'S ELECTION

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS the end of the late Queen Victoria's reign there resided in the suburban town of Croydon a gentleman of the name of Clutterbuck, who, upon a modest capital inherited from his father, contrived by various negotiations at his office in the City of London to gain an income of now some seven hundred, now more nearly a thousand, pounds in the year.

It will be remembered that a war of unprecedented dimensions was raging, at the time of which I speak, in the sub-continent of South Africa.

The President of the South African Republic, thinking the moment propitious for a conquest of our dominions, had invaded our territory after an ultimatum of incredible insolence, and, as though it were not sufficient that we should grapple foe to foe upon equal terms, the whole weight of the

Orange Free State was thrown into the scale against us.

The struggle against the combined armies which had united to destroy this country was long and arduous, and had we been compelled to rely upon our regular forces alone things might have gone ill. As it was, the enthusiasm of Colonial manhood and the genius of the generals prevailed. The names of Kitchener, Methuen, Baden-Powell, and Rhodes will ever remain associated with that of the Commander-in-Chief himself, Lord Roberts, who in less than three years from the decisive victory of Paardeburg imposed peace upon the enemy. Their territories were annexed in a series of thirty-seven proclamations, and form to-day the brightest jewel in the Imperial crown.

These facts—which must be familiar to many of my readers—I only recall in order to show what influence they had in the surprising revolutions of fortune which enabled Mr. Clutterbuck to pass from ease to affluence, and launched him upon public life.

The business which Mr. Clutterbuck had inherited from his father was a small agency chiefly concerned with the Baltic trade. This business had declined ; for Mr. Clutterbuck's father had failed to follow the rapid concentration of commercial effort which is the mark of our time. But Mr. Clutterbuck

had inherited, besides the business, a sum of close upon ten thousand pounds in various securities : it was upon the manipulation of this that he principally depended, and though he maintained the sign of the old agency at the office, it was the cautious buying and selling of stocks which he carefully watched, various opportunities of promotion in a small way, commissions, and occasional speculations in kind, that procured his constant though somewhat irregular income. To these sources he would sometimes add private advances or covering mortgages upon the stock of personal friends.

It was a venture of the latter sort which began the transformation of his life.

The last negotiations of the war were not yet wholly completed, nor had the coronation of his present Majesty taken place when, in the early summer of 1902, a neighbour of the name of Boyle called one evening at Mr. Clutterbuck's house.

Mr. Boyle, a man of Mr. Clutterbuck's own age, close upon fifty, and himself a bachelor, had long enjoyed the acquaintance both of Mr. Clutterbuck and of his wife. Some years ago, indeed, when Mr. Boyle resided at the Elms, the acquaintance had almost ripened into friendship, but Mr. Boyle's ill-health, not unconnected with financial worries, and later his change of residence to

15 John Bright Gardens had somewhat estranged the two households. It was therefore with a certain solemnity that Mr. Boyle was received into the neat sitting-room where the Clutterbucks were accustomed to pass the time between tea and the hour of their retirement.

They were shocked to see how aged Mr. Boyle appeared: he formed, as he sat there opposite them, the most complete contrast with the man whose counsel and support he had come to seek. For Mr. Clutterbuck was somewhat stout in figure, of a roundish face with a thick and short moustache making a crescent upon it. He was bald as to the top of his head, and brushed across it a large thin fan of his still dark hair. His forehead was high, since he was bald; his complexion healthy. But Mr. Boyle, clean-shaven, with deep-set, restless grey eyes, and a forehead ornamented with corners, seemed almost foreign; so hard were the lines of his face and so abundant his curly and crisp grey hair. His gestures also were nervous. He clasped and unclasped his hands, and as he delivered—at long intervals—his first commonplace remarks, his eyes darted from one object to another, but never met his host's: he was very ill.

His evident hesitation instructed Mrs. Clutterbuck that he had come upon some important matter; she therefore gathered up the yellow satin centre,

upon the embroidery of which she had been engaged, and delicately left the room.

When she had noiselessly shut the door behind her, Mr. Boyle, looking earnestly at the fire, said abruptly :

"What I have come about to-night, Mr. Clutterbuck, is a business proposition." Having said this, he extended the fore and middle fingers of his right hand in the gesture of an episcopal benediction, and tapped them twice upon the palm of his left ; which done, he repeated his phrase : "A business proposition" ; cleared his throat and said no more.

Mr. Clutterbuck's reply to this was to approach a chiffonier, to squat down suddenly before it in the attitude of a frog, to unlock it, and to bring out a cut glass decanter containing whiskey. The whiskey was Scotch ; and as Mr. Clutterbuck straightened himself and set it upon the table, he looked down upon Mr. Boyle with a look of property and knowledge, winked solemnly and said :

" Now, Mr. Boyle ! This is something you won't get everywhere. Pitt put me up to it." He made a slight gesture with his left hand. " Simply couldn't be bought ; that's what Pitt said. Not in the market ! Say when "—and with a firm smile he poured the whiskey into a glass which he set by Mr. Boyle's side, and next poured a far smaller

amount into his own. Indeed it was a feature of this epoch-making interview that the sound business instinct of Mr. Clutterbuck restrained him to a great moderation as he listened to his guest's advances.

When Mr. Boyle had drunk the first glass of that whiskey which Mr. Pitt had so kindly recommended to Mr. Clutterbuck, he was moved to continue:

"It's like this: if you'll meet me man to man, we can do business." He then murmured: "I've thought a good deal about this"—and while Mr. Boyle was indulging in these lucid preliminaries, Mr. Clutterbuck, who thoroughly approved of them, nodded solemnly several times.

"What I've got to put before you," said Mr. Boyle, shifting in his seat, gazing earnestly at Mr. Clutterbuck and speaking with concentrated emphasis, "is eggs!"

"Eggs?" said Mr. Clutterbuck with just that tone of contempt which the other party to a bargain should assume, and with just as much curiosity as would permit the conversation to continue.

"Yes, eggs," said Mr. Boyle firmly; then in a grand tone he added, "a million of 'em. . . . There!" And Mr. Boyle turned his head round as triumphantly as a sick man can, and filled up his glass again with whiskey and water.

"Well," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "what about your

million eggs ? What you want ? Are you buying 'em or selling 'em, or what ? "

The somewhat unconventional rapidity of Mr. Clutterbuck did not disturb Mr. Boyle. He leaned forward again and said : "I've only come to you because it's you. I knew you'd see it if any man would, and I thought I'd give you the first chance."

"Yes," said Mr. Clutterbuck slowly, "but how do you mean ? Is it buying or selling, or what ? "

" Neither," said Mr. Boyle, and then like a horse taking a hedge, he out with the whole business and said :

" It's cover. I want to carry on."

" Oh ! " said Mr. Clutterbuck deliberately cold, "that's a question of how much and on what terms. Though for the matter of business from one gentleman to another, I don't see what a million eggs anyhow, if you understand me . . ."

Here he began to think, and Mr. Boyle nodded intelligently to show that he completely followed the train of Mr. Clutterbuck's thought.

Mr. Boyle filled his glass again with whiskey and waited, but Mr. Clutterbuck, who had ever appreciated the importance of sobriety in the relations of commerce, confined himself to occasional sips at his original allowance. When some intervals of silence had passed between them in this manner,

and when Mr. Boyle had, now for the fourth time, replenished his glass, Mr. Clutterbuck, who could by this time survey the whole scheme in a lucid and organised fashion, repeated the number of eggs, to wit, one million, and after a considerable pause repeated also the fundamental proposition that it was a question of how much and upon what terms.

Mr. Boyle, staring at the fire and apparently obtaining some help from it, made answer: "A thousand."

A lesser man than Mr. Clutterbuck would perhaps have professed astonishment at so large a sum; he, however, like all men destined for commercial greatness at any period, however tardy, in their lives, said quietly:

"More like five hundred."

Mr. Clutterbuck had not yet divided one million by a thousand or by five hundred; still less had he estimated the probable selling value of an egg; but he was a little astonished to hear Mr. Boyle say with lifted eyebrows and a haughty expression: "Done with you!"

"It is not done with me at all," said Mr. Clutterbuck hotly, as Mr. Boyle poured out a fifth glass of whiskey and water. "It's not done with me at all! Wait till you see my bit of paper!"

Mr. Boyle assumed a look of weariness. "My

dear sir," he said, "I was only speaking as one gentleman would to another."

Mr. Clutterbuck nodded solemnly.

"It's not a matter of five hundred or a thousand between men like you and me."

Mr. Clutterbuck still nodded.

"I'm not here to see your name in ink. I'm here to make a business proposition."

Having said so much he rose to go. And Mr. Clutterbuck, appreciating that he had gained one of those commercial victories which are often the foundation of a great fortune, said: "I'll come and see 'em to-morrow. Current rate."

"One above the Bank," said Mr. Boyle, and they parted friends.

When Mr. Boyle was gone, Mr. Clutterbuck reclined some little time in a complete blank: a form of repose in which men of high capacity in organisation often recuperate from moments of intense activity. In this posture he remained for perhaps half an hour, and then went in, not without hesitation, to see his wife.

Eighteen years of married life had rendered Mrs. Clutterbuck's features and manner familiar to her husband. It is well that the reader also should have some idea of her presence. She habitually dressed in black; her hair, which had never been abundant, was of the same colour, and shone with extraordinary

precision. She was accustomed to part it in the middle, and to bring it down upon either side of her forehead. It was further to be remarked that round her neck, which was long and slender, she wore a velvet band after a fashion which royalty itself had not disdained to inaugurate. At her throat was a locket of considerable size containing initials worked in human hair; upon her wrists, according to the severity of the season, she wore or did not wear mittens as dark as the rest of her raiment. She spoke but little, save in the presence of her husband; her gestures were restrained and purposeful, her walk somewhat rapid; and her accent that of a cultivated gentlewoman of the middle sort; her grammar perfect. Her idiom, however, when it was not a trifle selected, occasionally erred. Her hours and diet are little to my purpose, but it is perhaps worth while to note that she rose at seven, and was accustomed to eat breakfast an hour afterwards, while hot meat in the middle of the day and cold meat after her husband's office hours, formed her principal meals. Her recreations were few but decided, and she had the method to attack them at regular seasons. She left Croydon three times in the year, once to visit her family at Berkhampstead, to which rural village her father had retired after selling his medical practice; once to the seaside, and once to spend a few days in the heart of London, during which

holiday it was her custom to visit the principal theatres in the company of her husband.

She had no children, and was active upon those four societies which, at the time of which I speak, formed a greater power for social good than any others in Croydon—the Charity Organisation Society, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a similar society which guaranteed a similar immunity to the children of the poor, and the Association for the Reform of the Abuses prevalent in the Congo "Free" State.

Though often solicited to give her aid, experience and subscriptions to many another body intent upon the uplifting of the lower classes, she had ever strictly confined herself to these four alone, which, she felt, absorbed the whole of her available energy. She had, however, upon two occasions, consented to take a stall for our Dumb Friends' League, and had once been patroness of a local ball given in support of the Poor Brave Things. In religion she was, I need hardly add, of the Anglican persuasion, in which capacity she attended the church of the Rev. Isaac Fowle ; though she was not above worshipping with her fellow citizens of other denominations when social duty or the accident of hospitality demanded such a courtesy.

As Mr. Clutterbuck entered, Mrs. Clutterbuck continued her work of embroidery at the yellow

centre, putting her needle through the fabric with a vigour and decision which spoke volumes for the restrained energy of her character; nor was she the first to speak.

Mr. Clutterbuck, standing at the fire parting his coat tails and looking up toward that ornament in the ceiling whence depended the gas pipe, said boldly: "Well, he got nothing out of *me!*"

Mrs. Clutterbuck, without lifting her eyes, replied as rapidly as her needlework: "I don't want to hear about your business affairs, Mr. Clutterbuck. I leave gentlemen to what concerns gentlemen. I hope I know *my* work, and that I don't interfere where I might only make trouble." It is remarkable that after this preface she should have added: "Though why you let every beggar who darkens this door make a fool of you is more than I can understand."

Mr. Clutterbuck was at some pains and at great length to explain that the imaginary transaction which disturbed his wife's equanimity had not taken place, but his volubility had no other effect than to call from her, under a further misapprehension, a rebuke with regard to his excess in what she erroneously called "wine." Her sympathetic remarks upon Mr. Boyle's state of health and her trust that her husband had not too much taxed his failing energies, did little to calm that business man's

now legitimate irritation, and it must be confessed that when his wife rose in a commanding manner and left the room to put all in order before retiring, a dark shadow of inner insecurity overcast the merchant's mind.

It was perhaps on this account that he left next day for the City by the 8.32 instead of taking, as was his custom, the 9.17 ; and that, still moody after dealing with his correspondence, he sought the office of Mr. Boyle in Mark Lane.

As he went through the cold and clear morning with the activity and hurry of the City about him, he could review the short episode of the night before in a clearer light and with more justice. His irritation at his wife's remarks had largely disappeared ; he had recognised that such irritation is always the worst of counsellors in a business matter ; he remembered Mr. Boyle's long career, and though that career had been checkered, and though of late they had seen less of each other, he could not but contrast the smallness of the favour demanded with the still substantial household and the public name of his friend. He further recollected, as he went rapidly eastward, more than one such little transaction which had proved profitable to him in the past, not only in cash, but, what was more important to him, in business relations.

It was in such a mood that he reached Mr. Boyle's

office : his first emotion was one of surprise at the fineness of the place. He had not entered it for many years, but during those years he had hardly represented Mr. Boyle to himself as a man rising in the world. He was surprised, and agreeably surprised ; and when one of the many clerks informed him that Mr. Boyle was down at the docks seeing to the warehouse, he took accurate directions of the place where he might find him, and went off in a better frame of mind ; nay, in some readiness to make an advance upon that original quotation of five hundred which, he was now free to admit, had been accepted by Mr. Boyle with more composure than he had expected.

He was further impressed as he left the office to see upon a brass plate the new name of Czernwitz added to Mr. Boyle's and to note the several lines of telephone which radiated from the central cabin that served the whole premises.

Commercial requirements are many, complicated, delicate and often secret ; nor was Mr. Clutterbuck so simple as to contrast the excellent appointments of the office and the air of prosperity which permeated it, with the personal and private offer for an advance which Mr. Boyle had been good enough to make.

The partnership of which Mr. Boyle was a member was evidently sound—the name of Czern-

witz was enough to show that; there could be little doubt of the banking support behind such an establishment; but the relations between partners often involve special details of which the outside world is ignorant, the moment might be one in which it was inconvenient to approach the bank in the name of the firm; a large concession might, for all he knew, have just been obtained for some common purpose; Mr. Boyle himself might have in hand a personal venture bearing no relation to the transactions of the partnership; he might even very probably be gathering, from more than one quarter, such small sums as he required for the moment. A man must have but little acquaintance with the City whose imagination could not suggest such contingencies, and upon an intimate acquaintance with the City and all its undercurrents Mr. Clutterbuck very properly prided himself. During that brief walk all these considerations were at work in Mr. Clutterbuck's mind, and severally leading him to an act of generosity which the future was amply to justify.

He went down to the docks; he entered the warehouse, and was there astonished to observe so many cases, each so full of brine, and that brine so packed with such a vast assemblage of eggs held beneath the surface by wire lattices, that an impression of incalculable wealth soon occupied the whole

of his spirit; for he perceived not only the paltry million in which Mr. Boyle had apparently embarked some private moneys (the boxes were marked with his name), but the vast stores of perhaps twenty other merchants who had rallied round England in her hour of need and had prepared an inexhaustible supply of sterilised organic albumenoids for the gallant lads at the front.

He went up several stairs through what must have been three hundred yards of corridor with eggs and eggs and eggs on every side—it seemed to him a mile—he pushed through a dusty door and saw at last the goal of his journey: Mr. Boyle himself. Mr. Boyle was wearing a dazzling top hat, he was dressed in a brilliant cashmere twill relieved by a large yellow flower in his buttonhole, and was seated before a little instrument wherein an electric lamp, piercing the translucency of a sample egg, determined whether it were or were not still suitable for human food.

Mr. Boyle recognised his visitor, nodded in a courteous but not effusive way, and continued his observations. He rose at last, and offered Mr. Clutterbuck a squint (an offer which that gentleman was glad to accept), and explained to him the working of the test; then he removed the egg from its position before the electric lamp, deposited it with care beneath the brine under that section of the lattice

to which it belonged, and said with a heartiness which his illness could not entirely destroy : "What brings you here ?"

Mr. Clutterbuck in some astonishment referred to their conversation of the night before.

Mr. Boyle laughed as soundly as a sick man can, coughed rather violently after the laugh, and said : "Oh, I'd forgotten all about it—it doesn't matter. I've seen Benskin this morning, and there's no hurry."

"My dear Boyle," said Mr. Clutterbuck warmly.

Mr. Boyle waved him away with his hand. "My dear fellow," he said, "don't let's have any explanations. I saw you didn't like the look of it, and, after all, what does it matter ? If one has to carry on for a day or two one can always find what one wants. It was silly of me to have talked to you about it. But when a man's ill he sometimes does injudicious things."

Here Mr. Boyle was again overcome with a very sharp and hacking cough which was pitiful to hear.

"You don't understand me, Boyle," said Mr. Clutterbuck with dignity and yet with assurance. "If it was a matter of friendship I'd do it at once ; but I can see perfectly well it's a matter of business as well, and you ought to allow me to combine both : I've known you long enough !"

Mr. Boyle, after a further fit of coughing, caught his breath and said: "You mean I ought to go to Benskin and let you in for part of it?"

"My dear Boyle," said Mr. Clutterbuck, now quite at his ease, "let me in for the whole of it, or what you like. After all, when you spoke about the matter last night it was sudden, and——"

"Yes, I know, I know," said Mr. Boyle, impatiently, "that's what I'm like. . . . You see I've twenty things to think of—these eggs are only part of it; and if I were to realise, as I could . . ."

Mr. Clutterbuck cut him short: "Don't talk like that, Boyle," he said, "I'll sign it here and now; and you shall send me the papers when you like."

"No, no," said Mr. Boyle, "that's not business. I'll introduce you to Benskin and you can talk it over."

With that he began to lead the way towards Mr. Benskin's office, when he suddenly thought better of it, and said: "Look here, Clutterbuck, this is the best way: I'll send you the papers. I'm in for a lot more than a million, but I'll earmark that million—eggs I mean. I won't bring Benskin into it, I'll send you the papers and when your six and eight-penny has passed 'em, you can hand over the

risk if you like. I want it, I tell you frankly, I want several of 'em, and I'm getting 'em all round; but there's no good letting everybody know. I won't touch your envelope or your pink slip till you've had the papers and got them passed. They're all made up, I'll send them round."

In vain did Mr. Clutterbuck protest that for so small a sum as £500 it was ridiculous that there should be formalities between friends. Mr. Boyle, alternately coughing and wagging his head, was adamant upon the matter. He led Mr. Clutterbuck back through the acres of preserved eggs, choosing such avenues as afforded the best perspective of these innumerable supplies, crossed with him the space before the Minories, re-entered, still coughing, the narrowness of Mark Lane, and promising Mr. Clutterbuck the papers within a few hours, turned into his own great doors.

Long before those hours were expired Mr. Clutterbuck had made up his mind: he knew the value of informal promptitude in such cases. He had hardly reached his own offices in Leadenhall Street, he had barely had time to take off his overcoat, to hang his hat upon a peg, to cover his cuffs with paper, to change into his office coat, and to take his seat at his desk, when he dictated a note relative to an advance in Perus, signed his cheque for five hundred and sent it round by a private messenger

with a few warm lines in his own handwriting such as should accompany a good deed wisely done.

He was contented with himself, he appreciated, not without justice, the rapidity and the sureness of his judgment; he withdrew the paper from his cuffs, put on his City coat and his best City hat, and determined to afford himself a meal worthy of so excellent a transaction. But genius, however lucid and immediate, is fated to endure toil as much as it is to enjoy vision; and this excellent speculation, greatly and deservedly as it was to enhance Mr. Clutterbuck's commercial reputation, was not yet safe in harbour.

He returned late from his lunch, which he had rounded up with coffee in the company of a few friends. It was nearly four. He asked carelessly if any papers had reached him from Mr. Boyle's office or elsewhere, and, finding they had been delayed, he went home without more ado, to return for them in the morning. He reached Croydon not a little exhilarated and pleased at the successes of the day—for he had had minor successes also; he had sold Pernambucos at 16½ just before they fell. In such a mood he committed the imprudence of making Mrs. Clutterbuck aware, though in the vaguest terms, that her opinion of Mr. Boyle was harsh, and that his own judgment of the man had risen not a little

from what he had seen that day. The lady's virtuous silence spurred him to further arguments, and though his confidences entered into no details and certainly betrayed nothing of the main business, yet the next morning as he reviewed the conversation in his mind, he regretted it.

He approached his office on that second day in a sober mood, prepared to scan the document which he awaited, and, if necessary, to visit his lawyer. No document was there; but Mr. Clutterbuck had had experience of the leisure of a solicitor's office, and, in youth, too many reminders of the results of interference to hasten its operation. What did surprise him, however, and that most legitimately, was the absence of any word of acknowledgment from his friend, in spite of the fact that the cheque had been cashed, as he discovered, the day before at a few minutes past twelve. Of all courses precipitation is the worst. Mr. Clutterbuck occupied himself with other matters; worked hard at the Warra-Mugga report, mastered it; sold Perterssens for Warra-Muggas (a very wise transaction); and returned home in a thoughtful mood by a late train.

The first news with which Mrs. Clutterbuck greeted him was the sudden and serious illness of Mr. Boyle, who was lying between life and death at 15 John Bright Gardens. As she announced this

fact to her husband, she looked at him in a manner suggestive neither of conciliation, nor of violence, nor of weakness, but, as it were, of calm control; and Mr. Clutterbuck, acting upon mixed emotions, among which anxiety was not the least, went out at once to have news of his friend. All that he could hear from the servant at the door was that the doctor would admit no visitor; that her master was extremely ill, but that he was expected to survive the night.

Mr. Clutterbuck hurried back home in a considerable confusion of mind, and was glad to find, as he approached his house, that everything was dark.

Next morning he postponed his journey to the City to call again as early as he decently could at 15 John Bright Gardens. Alas! the blinds were drawn at every window. The Dread Reaper had passed.

The effect produced by this calamity upon Mr. Clutterbuck was such as would have thrown a more emotional man quite off his balance. The loss of so near a neighbour, the death of a man with whom but fifty hours ago he had been in intimate conversation, was in itself a shock of dangerous violence. When there was added to this shock his natural doubts upon the status of the Million Eggs, it is not to be wondered that a sort of distraction

followed. He ran, quite forgetful of his dignity, to the nearest telephone cabin, rang up his office in the City, was given the wrong number, in his agony actually forgot to repeat the right number again, dashed out without paying, returned to fulfil this formality, pelted away toward the station, missed the 11.28, and, such was his bewildered mood, leapt upon a tram as though this were the quickest means of reaching information.

In a quarter of an hour a little calm was restored to him, though by this time the rapid electric service of the Electric Traction Syndicate had carried him far beyond the limits of Croydon. He got out at a roadside office, wrote out and tore up again half a dozen telegrams, seized a time-table, determined that after all the train was his best refuge, and catching the 12.17 at Norwood Junction, found himself in the heart of the City before half-past one. A hansom took him to his office after several intolerable but unavoidable delays in the half-mile it had to traverse. His visible perturbation was a matter of comment to his subordinates, who were not slow to inform him before he opened his mouth that the documents had not yet arrived.

Exhaustion followed so much feverish activity, an anxiety, deeper if possible than any he had yet shown, settled upon Mr. Clutterbuck's features. He

forgot to lunch, he walked deliberately to the warehouse, only to be asked what his business might be, and to be told that the particular section of eggs which he named were the property of Messrs. Czernwitz and Boyle, and could be visited by no one without their written order.

The tone in which this astonishing message was delivered would have stung a man of less sensitiveness and breeding than Mr. Clutterbuck; he turned upon his heel in a mood to which anger was now added, and immediately sought the office of that firm. But he was doomed to yet further delay. No one was in who could give him any useful information, nor even any one of so much responsibility as to be able to explain to him the extraordinary occurrences of the last few days.

He was at the point of a very grave decision—I mean of going on to his lawyers and perhaps disturbing to no sort of purpose the most delicate of commercial relations—when there moved past him into the office the ponderous and well-clad form of a gentleman past middle age, with such magnificent white whiskers as adorn the faces of too many Continental bankers, and wearing a simple bowler hat of exquisite shape and workmanship. He was smoking a cigar of considerable size and of delicious flavour, and by the deference immediately paid to

him upon his entry, Mr. Clutterbuck, as he stood in nervous anxiety by the door, could distinguish the head of the firm.

It was characteristic of the Baron de Czernwitz, and in some sort an explanation of his future success in our business world, ever so suspicious of the foreigner, that the moment he had heard Mr. Clutterbuck's name and business, he turned to him, in spite of his many preoccupations, with the utmost courtesy and said :

"It iss myself you want ? You shall come hier."

With these words he put his arm in the most gentlemanly manner through that of his exhausted visitor, and led him into an inner room furnished with all the taste and luxury which the Baron had learnt in Naples, Wurtemburg, Dantzig, Paris, and New York.

" Mr. Clottorbug, Mr. Clottorbug," he said leaning backwards and surveying the English merchant with an almost paternal interest, " what iss it I can do for you ? "

Mr. Clutterbuck, quite won by such a manner, unfolded the whole business. As he did so the Baron's face became increasingly grave. At last he took a slip of paper and noted on it one or two points—the amount, the date, and time of the trans-

action. This he gravely folded into four, and as gravely placed within a Russian leather pocket-book which contained, apart from certain masonic engagements, a considerable quantity of bank notes wrapped round an inner core of letter paper.

I cannot deny that Mr. Clutterbuck expected little from this just if good-natured man. The Baron, with whose name he was familiar, had no concern with, and no responsibility in, the most unfortunate accident which had befallen him. To make the interview (whose inevitable termination he thought he could foresee) the easier, Mr. Clutterbuck murmured that no doubt the firm of solicitors were preparing the papers, and that they would be in his hands within a brief delay. The Baron smiled largely and wagged his ponderous head.

"Oh! noh!" he said, and then added, as though he were summing up the thoughts of many years, "He voss a bad egg!"

Such an epithet applied to a friend but that moment dead might have shocked Mr. Clutterbuck under other circumstances; as things were, he could not entirely disagree with the verdict; and when he had informed the financier that Mr. Boyle's name had been placed separately from his partner's upon the boxes of the firm, even that expression

seemed hardly strong enough to voice M. de Czernwitz's feelings.

He next learned from the Baron's own lips how from senior partner Mr. Boyle had sunk to a salaried position; how even so he had but been retained through the kindness of the Baron; how he had more than once involved himself in petty gambling, and how the Baron had more than once actually paid the debts resulting from that mania; how his name had been kept upon the plate only after the most urgent entreaties and to save his pride; and how the Baron now saw that this act of generosity had been not only unwise but perhaps unjust in its effect upon the outer world.

When he had concluded his statement the nobleman knocked the ash from his cigar in such a manner that part of it fell upon Mr. Clutterbuck's trousers, and surveyed that gentleman with a shade of sadness for some moments.

Mr. Clutterbuck rose as though to go, saying, as he did so, that he had no business to detain his host, that he must bear his own loss, and that there was no more to be done. But the Baron, half rising, placed upon his shoulder a hand of such weight as compelled him to be seated.

"You shall *not* soffer!" he exclaimed to Mr. Clutterbuck's mingled amazement and delight. He spent the next few minutes in devising a plan, and

at last suggested that Mr. Clutterbuck should be permitted to purchase at a nominal price, the unhappy Million Eggs which were at the root of all this tragedy. He rang the bell for certain quotations and letters recently despatched by his firm; he satisfied the merchant of the prices to be obtained from Government under contracts which, he was careful to point out, ran "until hostilities in South Africa should have ceased"; he pointed out the advantages which so distant and indeterminate a date offered to the seller; and he concluded by putting the stock at Mr. Clutterbuck's disposal for £250.

Mr. Clutterbuck's gratitude knew no bounds. He was accustomed to the hard, dry, unimaginative temper of our English houses, and there swam in his eyes that salt humour which survives, alas! so rarely in the eyes of men over forty. He shook the Baron's left hand warmly—the right was occupied with the stump of the cigar—he reiterated his obligation, and came back to his own office with the gaiety of boyhood.

He found M. de Czernwitz a very different man of business from the unhappy fellow who had now gone to his account. Before five o'clock everything was in order, and he slept that night the possessor in law (and, as his solicitor was careful to advise him, in fact also) of One Million Eggs, supply

for the army in South Africa during the continuance of hostilities, and acquired by the substantial but moderate total investment of £750.

So true is it that probity and generosity go hand in hand with success in the world-wide commerce of our land.

CHAPTER II

THERE are accidents in business against which no good fortune nor even the largest generosity can protect us.

Mr. Clutterbuck woke the next morning, after a night of such repose as he had not lately enjoyed. The June morning in that delightful Surrey air awoke all the perfumes of his small but well-ordered garden, and he sauntered with a light step down its neat gravel paths, reflecting upon his new property, considering what advice he should take, whether to hold it for the necessities that might arise later in the year if the campaign should take a more difficult turn, or whether it would be found the experience of such of his friends as held Government contracts, that he had better offer at once in the expectation of an immediate demand.

To settle such questions needed some conversation with men back from the front, a certain knowledge of the conditions in South Africa (where, he was informed, the month of June was the depth of

winter), and many another point upon which a sound decision should repose.

As he mapped out his consequent activity for the coming day, he heard the postman opening the gate in front of his villa, and went out to intercept the daily paper which he delivered.

Mr. Clutterbuck tore its cover thoughtlessly enough in the expectation of discovering some minor successes or perhaps an unfortunate but necessary surrender of men and guns, when a leaded paragraph in large type and at the very head of the first column, struck him almost as with a blow. With a dramatic suddenness that none save a very few in the highest financial world could have expected, negotiations for peace had opened and the enemy had laid down their arms.

Mr. Clutterbuck sat down upon the steps of his house, oblivious of the giggling maid who was washing the stone behind him, and gazed blankly at the two Wellingtonias and the Japanese arbutus which dignified his patch of lawn. He left the paper lying where it was, and moved miserably into the house.

During the meal Mrs. Clutterbuck made no more allusion to his business than was her wont, and was especially careful to say nothing in regard to the deceased friend, whose relations with her husband she knew had latterly been more than those of an

ordinary acquaintance. She did, however, permit herself to suggest that there must be something extraordinary in the fact that the blinds in Mr. Boyle's house were now lifted, that there had been no orders for a funeral, and that her own investigations among her neighbours made it more than probable that no such ceremony would be needed.

The candid character of her husband was slow to seize the significance of this last item, but when in the course of the forenoon a police inspector, accompanied by a less exalted member of the force, respectfully desired an interview with him, Mr. Clutterbuck could not but experience such emotions as men do who find themselves engulfed in darkness by a sudden flood.

He was happy to find, after the first few moments, that it was not with him these bulwarks of public order were concerned, but with that faithless man whose name he had determined never again to pronounce.

Did Mr. Clutterbuck know anything of Mr. Boyle's movements? When had he last seen him? Had Mr. Boyle, to his knowledge, taken the train for Croydon as usual on the day he cashed the cheque? Had he any knowledge of Mr. Boyle's intentions? Had Mr. Boyle shown him, by accident or by design, a ticket for any foreign port? And if so (added the

official with the singular finesse of his profession) was that ticket made out for Buenos Ayres ?

To all of these questions Mr. Clutterbuck was happily able to give a frank, straightforward, English answer such as satisfied his visitors. Nor did he dismiss them without offering, in spite of the matutinal hour, to the more exalted one a glass of wine, to the lesser a tumbler of ale. To see them march in step out of his carriage gate was the first relief he had obtained that morning.

He comforted his sad heart by the very object of his sadness, as is our pathetic human way. He took a sort of mournful pride in handling the great key that gave him access to the warehouse, and a peculiar pleasure in snubbing the servant who had denied him when he had called before.

These eggs after all were a possession ; they were a tangible thing, a million was their number ; the very boxes in which they soaked were property ; and it cannot be denied that Mr. Clutterbuck, who had hitherto possessed no real thing nor extended his personality to any visible objects beyond his furniture, his clothes, his pipe, his bicycle, and his wife, could not but be influenced by the sense of ownership. Sometimes he would select an egg at random, and placing it in the machine which had been witness of his first decisive interview, he would examine whether or no it were still transparent ;

but the occupation was but a pastime. Often he did not really note their condition, and when he did note it, whether that condition were satisfactory or no, he would replace the sample as solemnly as he had chosen it.

Day after day it was Mr. Clutterbuck's mournful occupation to regard them as they lay stilly in their brine, these eggs that had so long awaited the call to arms from South Africa; that call which never came. To complete his despair the rumours of a full treaty of peace, which had tortured him for a whole week, were finally confirmed. He seemed irrecoverably lost, and though a preserved egg will always fetch its price in this country, yet the distribution of so vast a number, the search for a market, and the presence of such considerable competitors on every side—the total length of the boxes in which the eggs were stored amounted to no less than six miles and one-third—made him despair of recovering even one-half of the original sum which he had risked.

Mr. Clutterbuck must not be blamed for an anxiety common to every man of affairs in speculations which have not yet matured: and those who, from a more exalted position in society, or from a more profound study of our institutions would have reposed confidence in the equity of the Government, must not blame the humble merchant of Croydon

if in his bewilderment he misjudged for a moment the temper of a British Cabinet.

That temper did not betray him. The Government, at the close of the war were more than just—they were bountiful to those who, in the expectation of a prolonged conflict, had accumulated stores for the army.

No one recognised better than the Cabinet of the day under what an obligation they lay to the mercantile world which had seen them through the short but grave crisis in South Africa, nor did any men appreciate better than they the contract into which they had virtually if not technically entered, to recoup those whom their abrupt negotiations for peace had left in the lurch. It could not be denied that the published despatches of Lord Milner and the frequently expressed determination of the Government never to treat with the Dutch rebels in the Transvaal, had led the community in general to imagine a conflict of indefinite duration. And if, for reasons which it is not my duty to criticise here, they saw fit to reverse this policy and to put their names to a regular treaty, the least they could do for those whose patriotism had accumulated provisions to continue the struggle, was to recompense them not only equitably but largely for their sacrifice.

The decision so to act and to repurchase, with a special generosity, the eggs accumulated for our

forces, was reinforced by many other considerations besides those of political equity. It was recognised that for some time to come a considerable garrison would be necessary to constrain the terrible foe whom we had so recently vanquished; it was recognised that of all articles of diet the egg has recently been proved the most sustaining for its weight and price; the perishable nature of the commodity, though it had been counteracted by the scientific methods of the packers, was another consideration of great weight, certain as it was that the preservation of these supplies could not be indefinitely continued, and that the moment they were moved dissolution would be at hand; finally, the Government could not forget that these eggs, worth but a paltry farthing apiece upon the shores of the Baltic or in the frozen deserts of Siberia, would exchange in the arid waste of the veldt for fifty times that sum.

My readers will have guessed the conclusion: in spite of the fact that the chief packer was no less than Sir Henry Nathan, a man willing to wait, well able to do so, a continual and generous subscriber to the Relief Funds; in spite of a letter to the *Times* signed by Baron de Czernwitz himself in the name of the larger holders, and professing every willingness to accept bonds at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the condition of the smaller men was enough to decide the Govern-

ment. Within a week of the cessation of hostilities, offers had been issued to all the owners at the rate, less carriage, of one shilling for each egg which should be found actually present beneath the surface of the brine ; for here, as in every other matter, our Government regulations are strict and minute ; there was no intention of paying in the rough for a vague or computed number : it was necessary that every egg should be counted, and its preservation determined, before a shilling of public money should be exchanged for it. The inspection, the cost of which fell, as was only just, upon the public purse, was rapidly and efficiently accomplished by a large body of experts chosen for the purpose, and organised under the direction of Lord Henry Townley, whose name and salary alone are a guarantee of scientific excellence and accuracy. Thus it was that a group of merchants who had in no way pressed the authorities, who had stood the stress and strain of waiting during those last critical days before the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed, obtained, as such men always will from our Commonwealth, the just reward of their public spirit and endurance.

Mr. Clutterbuck was perhaps not so fortunate as some others. Of the million eggs which he nominally controlled, no less than 8306 were rejected upon examination, and the bonds he received, so far from

amounting to a full £5000, fell short of that sum by over £415. Certain expenses incidental to the transaction further lowered the net amount paid over, but even under these circumstances Mr. Clutterbuck was not disappointed to receive over £4500 as his share of compensation for loss and delay.

Those who are willing to see in human affairs the guiding hand of Providence and who cannot admit into their vocabulary the meaningless expression "coincidence," will reverently note the part which an English Government played in the foundation of a private fortune.

Elated, and (it must be admitted) rendered a little wayward in judgment by this accession of wealth, Mr. Clutterbuck was more deeply convinced of advancing prosperity when the rise of Government credit during the next weeks still further increased the value of the bonds which his bank held for him. He sold in July, and with the sum he realised entered upon yet another venture, which must be briefly reviewed. Upon the advice of an old and dear friend he purchased no less than 72,000 shares in the discredited property of the Curicanti Docks. The one pound shares of that unhappy concern had fallen steadily since 1897, when the whaling station had been removed to Dolores; but even here, imprudent as the speculation may appear, his good fortune followed him.

The friend whose advice Mr. Clutterbuck had followed—a private gentleman—had himself long held shares in the property of that distant port; its continued misfortune had raised in him such doubts as to its future that he thought it better a solid brain such as Mr. Clutterbuck's should help to direct its fortunes, than that he and others like him should be at the loss of their small capital. He arranged with an intermediary for the sale of the shares should Mr. Clutterbuck desire to purchase in the open market, and was relieved beyond measure to find his advice followed and Mr. Clutterbuck in possession of the whole parcel at one and a penny each. To the astonishment, however, of the friend, and still more of the intermediary whom that friend had employed, the difficulties of the Curicanti Docks were in the very next month submitted to arbitration; a man of Cabinet rank, whose name I honour too much to mention here, was appointed arbitrator. The help of the Imperial Government was afforded to re-establish a concern whose failings were purely commercial, but whose strategic importance to the Empire it needs but a glance at the map to perceive. The shares which had dropped some days after Mr. Clutterbuck's purchase to between ninepence ha'pennny and ninepence three farthings, rose at once upon the news of this Imperial Decision to half a crown. The negotiations were

conducted by that tried statesman with so much skill and integrity that, before September, the same shares were at eight and fourpence, and though the commercial transactions of the port and the grant of Government money upon the Admiralty vote did not warrant the public excitement in this particular form of investment, it was confidently prophesied they would go to par. They did not do so, but when they had reached, and were passing, ten shillings Mr. Clutterbuck sold.

He had not intended to dispose of them at so early a date, for he was confident, as was the rest of the public, that they would go to par. His action, due to a sudden accession of nervousness and to a contemplation of the large profit already acquired, turned out, however (as is so often the case with the sudden decisions of men with business instinct!) profoundly just. In one transaction, indeed, a few days later, Curicantis were quoted at ten shillings and sixpence, but it is not certain that they really changed hands at that price, and certainly they went no higher.*

* The present price of sixpence a share is, in the opinion of the author, merely nominal, and any one with a few pounds to spare would do well to buy, for further Government action in connection with the docks has been rendered inevitable by the necessity of admitting new ships of the *Dreadnought* type for repair to plates after firing.

As the autumn thus turned to winter, Mr. Clutterbuck found himself possessed, somewhat to his bewilderment and greatly to the increase of his manhood, of over £50,000.

It has often been remarked by men of original genius as they look back in old age upon their careers, that some one turning point of fortune established in them a trust in themselves and determined the future conduct of their minds, strengthening all that was in them and almost compelling them to the highest achievement. In that autumn this turning point had come for Mr. Clutterbuck.

There were subtle signs of change about the man: he would come home earlier than usual; the four o'clock train in which the great Princes of Commerce are so often accommodated would receive him from time to time; there were whole Saturdays on which he did not leave for the City at all. He was kinder to his wife and less careful whether he were shaved or no before ten o'clock in the morning. Other papers than the *Times* found entry to his villa: he was open to discuss political matters with a broad mind, and had more than once before the year was ended read articles in the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Westminster Gazette.* He had also attended not a few profane concerts, and had bought, at the recommendation of a local dealer,

six etchings, one after Whistler, the other five original.

But, such is the effect of fortune upon wise and balanced men, he did not immediately proceed to use his greatly increased financial power in the way of further speculation; he retained his old offices, he invested, sold, and reinvested upon a larger scale indeed than he had originally been accustomed to, but much in the same manner. A cheeriness developed in his manner towards his dependents, notably towards his clerk and towards the office boy, a staff which he saw no reason to increase. He would speak to them genially of their affairs at home, and when he had occasion to reprimand or mulct them, a thing which in earlier days he had never thought of doing, it was always in a sympathetic tone that he administered the rebuke or exacted the pecuniary penalty.

It was long debated between himself and his wife whether or no they should set up a brougham; and Mrs. Clutterbuck, having pointed out the expense of this method of conveyance, herself decided upon a small electric landaulette, which, as she very well pointed out, though of a heavier initial cost, would be less expensive to maintain, less capricious in its action, and of a further range. She argued with great facility that in case of any interruption in train service, or in the sad event of her own demise, it

would still be useful for conveying her husband to and from the City; and Mr. Clutterbuck having pointed out the many disadvantages attaching to this form of traction, purchased the vehicle, only refusing, I am glad to say, with inflexible determination, to have painted upon its panels the crest of the Montagues.

No extra servants were added to the household; but in the matter of dress there was a certain largeness; the cook was trained at some expense to present dishes which Mr. Clutterbuck had hitherto only enjoyed at the Palmerston Restaurant in Broad Street; and the bicycle, which was now no longer of service, was given open-handedly to the gardener who had hitherto only used it by permission.

Simultaneously with this increase of fortune, Mr. Clutterbuck acquired a clean and decisive way of speaking, prefaced most commonly by a little period of thought, and he permitted himself certain minor luxuries to which he had hitherto been unaccustomed: he would buy cigars singly at the tobacconist's; he used credit in the matter of wine, that is, of sherry and of port, and his hat was often ironed when he was shaved.

It must not be imagined, however, that these new luxuries gravely interfered with the general tenor of his life. His wife perceived, indeed, that something was easier in their fortunes, that the cash necessary

for her good deeds (and this was never extravagant) was always present and was given without grudging. His ample and ready manner impressed his neighbours with some advance in life. But nothing very greatly changed about him. He lived in the same house, with the same staff of servants; he entertained no more at home, for he was shy of meeting new friends, and but little more in the City, where also his acquaintance was restricted. This wise demeanour resulted in a continual accumulation, for it is not difficult in a man of this substance to buy and sell with prudence upon the smaller scale. Mr. Clutterbuck for five years continued a sensible examination of markets, buying what was obviously cheap, selling what even the mentally deficient could perceive to be dear, and though he missed, or rather did not attempt, many considerable oppor tunities (among which should honourably be mentioned Hudson Bays, and the rise in the autumn of 1907 of the London and North Western Railway shares),* the general trend of his judgment was accurate. For two years he maintained a slight but sufficient growth in his capital, and he entered what was to prove a new phase of his life in the year 1910 with a property, not merely upon paper, but in rapidly negotiable securities,

* After the fruitful interference of the Board of Trade.

of over £60,000, a solid outlook on the world, and a knowledge of the market which, while it did not pretend to subtle or occult relations with the heads of finance, still less to an exalted view of European politics, was minute and experienced.

It was under these conditions that such an increment of wealth came to him as only befalls men who have earned the apparent accident of fortune by permanent and uncompromising labour.

In the April of that momentous year 1910, Mr. Clutterbuck suddenly achieved a financial position of such eminence as those who have not toiled and thought and planned are too often tempted to believe fortuitous.

CHAPTER III

It was certain, as the month of April 1910 proceeded, that a demand would suddenly be made upon English capital for the exploitation of the Manatasara Syndicate's concession upon the Upper Congo.

I mention the matter only to elucidate what follows, for Mr. Clutterbuck was neither of the social rank nor of the literary world in which the salvation of the unhappy natives of the Congo had been the principal theme for months and years before.

That salvation had been only recently achieved, but the hideous rule of Leopold no longer weighed upon the innocent and unfortunate cannibals of equatorial Africa; dawn had broken at last upon those millions whom Christ died to save, and whom so many missionaries had undertaken hasty and expensive voyages to free from an exploitation odious to the principles of our Common Law.

But though the consummation of that great event, which history will always record as the chief

achievement of modern England, was but freshly written upon the tablets of our age, there were not a few in the financial and ecclesiastical world of London who could read the signs of the times, and could appreciate the material results which would follow upon the advent of Christian liberty for these unhappy men. I have but to mention Sir Joseph Gorley, the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Shoreham, Sir Harry Hog, Mrs. Entwistle, Lord Barry, the Dean of Betchworth, Lord Blackwater, and his second son, the Hon. I. Benzinger, to show the stuff of which the reformers were composed.

There were some, indeed, to whom the financial necessities of the unhappy natives were but a second consideration, absorbed as they were in the spiritual needs of the African; but there were others who saw, with the sturdy common sense which has led us to all our victories, that little could be done even upon the spiritual side, until marshes had been drained, forests cleared, fields ploughed, and the most carefully chosen implements imported from as carefully chosen merchants in the capitals of Europe. The directing hand and brain of the European must be lent to raise the material position of those unhappy savages in whom the Belgian had almost obliterated the semblance of humanity.

For this purpose had been chosen, after long thought by those best acquainted with the district,

Mr. Charles Hatton, brother of that Mr. Sachs whose name will be familiar to all as the originator of the Society for the Prevention of the Trade in Tobacco to the Inhabitants of Liberia, and the successful manager of Chutes Limited.

Mr. Hatton, who, upon his marriage with Amelia, daughter and heiress of Sir Henry Hatton, of Hatton Hall, Hatton, in Herefordshire, had adopted his father-in-law's name and had lent the whole of his considerable fortune, and of his yet more considerable talents, to the uplifting of the equatorial negro. Mr. Hatton it was who successfully carried through the negotiations with the Colonial Committee of the Belgian Parliament, and who obtained for his syndicate the concession of the Manatasara district for twenty-one years.

The first act of the concessionaires was to take advantage of the new regulations whereby future chartered rulers in the Congo might declare the native to be the owner of his land. The soil to which these poor blacks were born was restored to them. The hideous system of forced labour was at once ended, and in its place one uniform hut tax was imposed upon the whole community. All were free, and though the actual amount of labour required to discharge the tax was perhaps triple the old assessment, yet as it fell equally upon the whole tribe, no complaint of injustice could be made, nor,

to judge from the absence of complaint in the London papers, was any felt.

In many other ways the new *régime* witnessed to the great truth that business and righteousness are not opposed in the Dark Continent. Where the native had been permitted to run free at every risk to his morals and to ours, he was now segregated in neat compounds under a tutelage suitable to his stage of development. The early marriages at which the fatuous Continental friars had winked, were severely repressed. The adoption of Christianity in any of its forms (except Mormonism), was left to the free exercise of individual choice, but the pestilent folly of ordaining native priests was at once forbidden. Most important of all, the abominable restriction of human liberty by which, under the accursed rule of King Leopold the native's very food and drink had been supervised, was replaced by an ample liberty in which he was free to accept or to reject the beverages of civilisation. The natural temptation which gin at a penny the bottle offers to a primitive being was not met as of old by slavish prohibition, but by the wiser and more noble engine of persuasion, and the temperance leagues already springing up in the coast towns, gave promise of deep effect upon the general tone of the native community.

To all this beneficent endeavour, capital alone was lacking. To look for it in the hardened and worldly

centres of the continent was hopeless. Those who in our own country would some years ago have been the first to come forward, had recently so suffered through the necessary initial expense of Rhode's glorious dream, that with all the good will in the world they hesitated to embark upon novel ventures in Africa.

More than one godly woman, persuaded by the eloquence of those who had heard of the atrocities, was willing to venture her few hundreds; and more than one wealthy manufacturer bestowed considerable donations of fifty pounds and more upon the spiritual side of the new enterprise: one high spirit of fire endowed a bishopric with £300 a year for three years. But the attempt to float a company upon the basis of the concession was still in jeopardy, and it seemed for a moment as though all those years of effort to destroy the infamy of Leopold's control had been thrown away.

The concessionaires, eager as they were to work in the vineyard, could hardly be expected to go forward until the general public should take something of the burden off their hands. It was under these circumstances that the Manatasara Syndicate and its offspring the company stood in the spring of 1910.

Put in terms of Eternal Life, the shares in the new company of the Manatasara Syndicate which

was to uplift so many poor negroes and to free so many human souls, were more precious than pearl or ruby and above the price of chrysoprase,* but in the cold terms of our mortal markets this month of April found them utterly unsaleable. Yet the capital required was small, one considerable purchase would have been enough to start the sluggish stream; and if it be asked why, under these circumstances, Mr. Hatton did not use his considerable financial influence to obtain the first subscriptions, the answer is that he was far too high-minded to persuade any man, even for the noblest of ideals, to the smallest risk for which he might later seem responsible. As to his own means, ardent as was his enthusiasm for the cause of our black brothers, he owed it to his wife, to his bright-eyed boy, and to his aged father-in-law, Sir Charles Hatton of Hatton Hall, who was penniless, to risk no portion of the family fortune in any speculation no matter how deserving.

The public, though their ears were ringing with the name of Manatasara, and though the Press spoke of little else, held back; there was an interval—a very short one—during which the reconstruction of the whole affair was seriously considered in secret, when the Hand which will so

* Habakkuk xvi. 8.

often be observed in these pages, visibly moved for the benediction of Mr. Clutterbuck and of the great Empire which he was destined to serve.

The Municipal Council of Monte Zarro, in southern Italy, had in that same spring of 1910 determined upon the construction of new water-works; and in the true spirit of the men who inherit from Garibaldi, from Crispi, and from Nathan,* they had put the contract up to the highest—or rather, to the most efficient—tender. I need hardly say that the firm of Bigglesworth, of Tyneside, the Minories, and Pall Mall East, obtained the contract; a firm intimately connected both with the Foreign Office and with the Cavaliere Marlio, and one whose name is synonymous with thorough if expensive workmanship. The bonds to be issued in connection with this progressive enterprise were to bear an interest of four and a half per cent., and in view of the comparative poverty of the town and the extensive nature of the investment (which was designed for a town of at least 50,000 inhabitants, though Monte Zarro numbered no more than 15,000), in view also of the high cost of municipal action in Italy, was to be issued at some low figure; the precise price was

* The sometime Mayor of Rome; not to be confounded with Sir Henry Nathan, whom we recently came across in the matter of the eggs.

conveyed privately to a few substantial clients of Barnett and Sons' Bank who all precipitately refused to touch the security : all, that is, with the exception of Mr. Clutterbuck.

He, with the unerring instinct that had now guided him for nearly eight long years, decided to take up the issue. It was not until he had twice dined, and generously, with a junior partner of the bank that he was finally persuaded to support the scheme with his capital, nor did his loyal nature suspect the bias that others were too ready to impute to the banker's recommendation.

Indeed, Mr. Clutterbuck was led to this determination not so much by the extremely low price at which the bonds were offered him, or the considerable interest they were pledged to bear, as by the implied and, as it were, necessary guarantee of the Italian Government which Barnett and Sons assured him were behind them. Of the two things, as the junior partner was careful to point out, one must occur : either the interest upon the outlay would be too much for the Municipality, in which case the Government would be bound to intervene, or the interest would be regularly paid, at least for the first few years, in which case the price of eighty-three at which the bonds were offered was surely so low as to ensure an immediately profitable sale.

Mr. Clutterbuck was in no haste, however ; the

issue still had some days before it, he was still considering what precise sum he was prepared to furnish, when he felt, during one of the later and more bitter mornings of that April, an unaccountable weakness and fever which increased as the day proceeded.

He at once consulted an eminent physician of his recent acquaintance, and was assured by the Baronet that if he were not suffering from the first stages of influenza, he was either the victim of a feverish cold or possibly of overwork.

This grave news determined him, as a prudent man, to leave his business for some days and to take a sea voyage, but before doing so, with equal prudence he put a power of attorney into the hands of a confidential clerk and left witnessed instructions upon the important investment which would have to be made in his absence.

Unfortunately, or rather fortunately—such are the mysterious designs of Heaven—he dictated these full and minute instructions which he was to leave behind him, and in the increasing discomfort which he felt toward evening, he neglected to read over the typewritten copy presented him to sign.

That evening at Croydon, the symptoms being now more pronounced, it was patent even to the suburban doctor that Mr. Clutterbuck was the

prey of a Diplococcus, not improbably the hideous Diplococcus of pneumonia.

* * * * *

The confidential clerk heard with regret next morning by telephone of the misadventure that had befallen his master; but he was a man of well-founded confidence in himself; he had now for five years past conducted the major part of Mr. Clutterbuck's affairs, under his superior's immediate direction, it is true, and his proficiency had earned him a high and increasing salary. Save for an active anxiety as to Mr. Clutterbuck's ultimate recovery, the terms of his will, and other matters naturally falling within his province, he knew that he had all the instructions and powers upon which to act during the next few days.

He spent the first of those days in visiting, in company with his second cousin Hyacinth, the charming old town of Rye; the second, which was also the first of Mr. Clutterbuck's delirium, he occupied in perusing and digesting at length the detailed instructions which had been left in his hands.

With the fact that a large investment must of necessity be made in a few days he was already familiar: his master had sold out and had placed to his current account at Parr's the important sum destined to meet it. But he was necessarily in

ignorance of the precise security in which that sum was to be placed, for Mr. Clutterbuck had come to his final determination but a little while before his illness had struck him.

The instructions would, he knew, contain his orders in every particular, and it was mainly with the object of discovering what he was to do in this chief matter that he studied the lines before him.

The directions given covered a multitude of points; they concerned the buying and selling of a certain number of small stocks, especially the realisation of certain Siberian Copper shares, which still stood high, but which Mr. Clutterbuck, having heard upon the best authority that the copper was entirely exhausted, had determined to convey to some other gentleman before the general public should acquire, through the Press, information which he had obtained at no small expense in advance of the correspondents.

There followed several paragraphs relative to the installation of certain improvements in the office, upon which Mr. Clutterbuck was curiously eager; next, in quite a brief but equally clear passage, was the order—if the merchant were not himself able to attend to the matter by the 25th at latest—to take up 15,000 shares in the Muntsar issue; an investment, the instructions added, on which the fullest particu-

lars would be afforded him, if he were in any doubt, by Messrs. Barnett and Sons.

The Confidential Clerk was in very considerable doubt. The word as it stood was meaningless. He sent for Miss Pugh, the shorthand writer, and her notes; they appeared together with hauteur, and the Confidential Clerk, who in humbler days had done his 120 words a minute, carefully examined the outline. It was not very neat, but there was the "Mntsor" right enough. He complained of the vowels, and received from Miss Pugh, whom he openly admired, so sharp a reprimand as silenced him. . . . Yet his experience assured him that "Mnt" was not an English form. He began to experiment with the vowels. He tried "e" and "a" and made Muntusare, which was nonsense; then he tried "a" and "u"; then "a" and "e"; and suddenly he saw it.

In a flash he remembered a friend of his who was employed in the offices of a syndicate; he should surely have guessed! Manatasara!

More than once that friend had hinted at the advantage of "setting the ball rolling." More than once had he spoken in flattery of the Confidential Clerk's ascendency over his master and with unmerited contempt of that master's initiative. . . . He had even let it be known that the introduction of Mr. Clutterbuck's name alone would be regarded with

substantial gratitude by Mr. Hatton. . . . The more he thought of it the more he was determined that Manatasara was the word . . . and he needed no help from Barnett and Sons now.

He considered the habits of his friend, and remembered that he commonly lunched at the Woolpack. To the Woolpack went the Confidential Clerk a little after two, and found that friend making a book with Natty Timpson, Joe Buller, and the rest upon the approaching but most uncertain Derby. He joined them, drew him aside, briefly told him his business, and asked him how he should proceed.

His friend, who was a true friend and a little drunk, conveyed to him, in language which would certainly be tedious here and probably offensive, the extreme pleasure his principals would find in Mr. Clutterbuck's determination: the probability that the Confidential Clerk himself would not go unrewarded. He spoke of his own high hopes; then, as he contemplated the opportunity in all its greatness, it so worked upon his own enthusiasm as to make him insist upon accompanying the reluctant Clerk to the office itself, and introducing him in a flushed but articulate manner to Mr. Hatton's private secretary.

The two were closeted together for something less than an hour; it was not four o'clock when

they parted. Mr. Hatton's secretary, forgetting all social distinctions, shook hands warmly at the door with the Confidential Clerk, who passed out heedless of his friend's eager pantomime in the outer office. And thus it was that by the morning of the next day, while poor Mr. Clutterbuck's temperature was hovering round 104° (Fahrenheit), no small portion of his goods were already earmarked for the Great Crusade to Redeem the Negro Race.

Mr. Clutterbuck's illness reached its crisis and passed; but for many days he was not allowed to hear the least news, still less to occupy himself with business. The Confidential Clerk was far too careful of his master's interests to jeopardise them by too early a call upon his energies. He wrote a daily report to Mrs. Clutterbuck to the effect that nothing had been done beyond the written instructions left by her husband, that all was well, and the office in perfect order. He was at the pains of dictating a daily synopsis of the correspondence he had opened and answered; and though the offer of marriage which since his new stroke of fortune he had made to Miss Pugh for the second time had for the second time been rejected, he continued to utilise her services, both on his own account and on that of his absent principal.

He dictated considerable reports upon the movements of his favourite stocks to greet Mr. Clutter-

buck's eye upon his recovery, and in a hundred ways gave evidence of his discretion and his zeal now that he could look forward to his master's early return.

Meanwhile Barnett and Sons, after assuring themselves by certain general questions that Mr. Clutterbuck had said nothing with regard to any Italian investment, held the parcel over till it could be dealt with in person, and were satisfied of the tenacity of purpose of their client.

In the first week of May Mr. Clutterbuck, his crescent of a moustache untrimmed, his hair quite grey, but the broad fan of it still clinging to his large, bald forehead, was permitted for the first time after so many days to see the papers and hear news of the world.

He was languid and utterly indifferent, as convalescents are, to what had hitherto been his chief interests, but as a matter of wifely duty Mrs. Clutterbuck felt herself bound to read him at full length the City article in the *Times*, and as she did so on the third day her philanthropic and evangelising eye was caught, in the midst of names that had no meaning for her, by the one name Manatasara. It was the feature of the moment that the new company had been successfully launched.

A strong Imperialist, like most women of the governing classes and of the Established Faith,

whether in this country or in Scotland, she naturally rejoiced to observe securely forged yet another bond with the Britains Overseas. She could comprehend little of the technicalities of promotion, but she was aware that another of these achievements, of which the Chartered Company of South Africa had for so many years been the brilliant type, was upon the eve of its success, and she rejoiced with a joy in which the love of country stood side by side with a pure and sincere attachment to her religion.

As one day of convalescence succeeded to another, this item of news began to grow so insistent that the wan invalid could not but take some heed of it. Although the long list of shares and prices recited like a litany had carried with it, when it had approached him through his wife's lips, something more than tedium, yet when he was permitted to read and select in it for himself and with his own eyes, the prominence given to Manatasara's interwove with his reviving interest in life the story of Charles Hatton's creation.

The capital was not large: the district was but one of many, but the strong interest which the place had aroused and the very restriction in the number of available shares had roused the public.

The allotment had been followed by a sharp rise.

There were dealings in the new quotation so continual and so vigorous as to recall the great days before the South African War. The premium upon "Congoes," as they were affectionately called, rose without ceasing—and just at the moment when Mr. Clutterbuck was beginning, but only beginning, to grasp the story of the company, he was permitted, somewhat doubtfully, by his doctor to return for an hour or two to the City.

He reached his office, where a warm and cordial welcome awaited him; his correspondence had already been opened, and an abstract made by his Clerk and Secretary, when, before he had fully mastered what had happened, that admirable assistant remarked to him in a tone more deferential than he had expected, that he had received full allotment for his application in consideration of the very early date on which he approached the Syndicate.

"What allotment?" said the enfeebled Mr. Clutterbuck, as he looked up in some astonishment from the paper before him.

"The allotment in Congoes, sir. I understood I was to apply. I kept the money ready, sir."

"You've paid nothing I hope," said Mr. Clutterbuck in a testy voice too often associated with convalescents. "You haven't been such a fool as to pay anything on your own?"

"Well, sir——" said the Clerk hesitatingly. Then he waited for a moment for the full effect of his good fortune to penetrate Mr. Clutterbuck's renewed conceptions of the outer world.

Mr. Clutterbuck read the letter before him twice over, slowly. He had received allotment to the full amount; the call had been for a half-crown on 60,000. He did not appreciate how he stood. His mind, always rather sane than alert, was enfeebled by illness and long absence from affairs.

"You've been doing something silly," he said again peevishly, "something damned silly. I don't understand. I'll repudiate it. I don't understand what you've done—I don't believe it's meant for me at all."

"I humbly did my best, sir; I was assured, really and truly, that a quarter was the most they'd allow, sir; I truly believed I wasn't risking more than 15,000 of yours, sir; I did truly."

"Oh! do be quiet," said his principal, as he turned again to the letter. His head hurt him, and he had a buzzing in the ears. He felt he wasn't fit for all this. It was a cruel injustice to a man barely on his feet after a glimpse of the grave.

The Clerk had the wisdom to hold his tongue and to wait. And as he waited it dawned upon Mr. Clutterbuck that he held 60,000 Congoes; the Congoes he had heard talked of in the train; the

Congoes of which the papers had been full during the long listless days when he had lain beside his window looking out into the little sunlit garden; the Congoes with which every feature of the repeated view from that window had become grotesquely associated in his invalid imagination. He was just about to speak again, perhaps to say the something which his Clerk most dreaded, when he was swamped by a realisation of what had happened.

What Mr. Clutterbuck in health would have seen in five or ten minutes, Mr. Clutterbuck in convalescence at last grasped, at least as to its main lines. He remembered two men in the train as he went in, and their angry discussion: how one who pooh-poohed the whole affair and said they would not go beyond three before next settling day; and the other, who was equally confident, swore that they could not fail to pass five and might touch seven, At the lowest the paper ready to his hands was 60,000 of those same.

He deliberately settled his face and said to the Clerk in an impassive and altered tone:

"Have you heard what people are offering?"

"Well, sir, it's all talk so far," answered the Clerk. "Some were saying two and a half, and I heard one gentleman say two and five-eighths; but it's all talk, sir."

He watched his master narrowly, standing a little behind him and scrutinising his face as he bent over the letter and read its short contents for the fourth time. He was well content with the result of that scrutiny.

As for Mr. Clutterbuck, he now perceived quite clearly (and was astonished to discern his own quiet acquiescence in the discovery) that he was at that moment—by some accident which mystified him—the possessor of over £200,000 in one department of his investments alone. He sighed profoundly, and said in something like his old voice:

"I supposed they've had their cheque?"

"Yes, sir, undoubtedly," said the clerk rapidly.

Mr. Clutterbuck called for the cheque-book on Parr's, casually asked the balance, turned to the counterfoil and, initialled the £7500 sacrifice, he rose from the table a man worth a quarter of a million all told.

The air was warmer with the advent of summer. It was a pleasant day, and Mr. Clutterbuck, throwing open the window and letting in the roar of the sunlit street, leant for awhile looking out and taking deep draughts of air. He noted all manner of little things, the play of the newsboys, the ribbons upon the dray horses, the chance encounters of passers-by, and the swirl and the eddy of men.

Then he drew in again, more composed, and said to the clerk :

"Well, I suppose there's nothing more to be done to-day." Then it occurred to him to add : "If any one comes round from Barnett's, tell 'em 'certainly.'"

"Certainly what, sir ?" said the clerk. They had been round more than once, and lately a little anxiously, but he did not like to trouble Mr. Clutterbuck at that moment with such details.

"Why," said that gentleman with a touch of his invalid's testiness returning, "tell 'em I'm ready to do what they want. I promised them something before—before my illness. Tell them 'certainly.' Tell them I'll be here again to-morrow."

The clerk helped him on with his heavy fur coat and saw him carefully to the carriage he had hired. He urged him to drive back the whole way. But Mr. Clutterbuck shook his head, and drove to the station. He would soon be well again.

That afternoon, just after hours, another anxious message came from Barnett's, but this time they were satisfied. Mr. Clutterbuck was entirely at their service ; he would be at the office next day.

This revolution—for it was no less—acted like a tonic upon the man into whose life it had come. His health was restored to him with a rapidity which the doctor, who had repeatedly urged him

to seek a particular hotel upon the English Riviera, marvelled at and frequently denied. There is no better food for a man's recovery than the food of his vigorous manhood, and this, with Mr. Clutterbuck, was the food of affairs. To venture, to perceive before another, to seize the spoil, is life to men of his kind; and he could now recognise in himself one of those whose foresight and lightning action win the great prizes of this world.

He was at his office every day, first for a short spell only, but soon for the old full working hours; and in the midst of twenty other interests which were rather recreations than labours, he watched Congoes. In the eagerness of that watch he neglected all the marvels the newspapers had to tell him of an energy that was transforming the old hell of the equator into a paradise. He even neglected the great spiritual work which Dr. Perry and his assistant clergy had so manfully begun. It must honestly be confessed that he watched nothing but the fluctuation of the Company's shares.

Mrs. Clutterbuck went to the seaside without him. He saw them touch seven in the heat of the summer; he was confident they would go further. They fell to six before the opening of August, to five a week later. His sound commercial instinct bade him beware; at four and a half he sold. Then and then only did he take his long holiday away from the

strain of business ; a holiday marred to some extent by the observation that the moment he had disposed of them Congoes rose like a balloon to a point still higher than that at which he might himself much earlier have realised.

But though this secret thorn remained in his own side, to the world he was a marvel ; first Croydon talked of him, then the City, then Mayfair, and the sportsmen, and even the politicians. In ever-increasing circles, at greater and greater distances from himself, fantastically exaggerated even in his own immediate neighbourhood and growing to be a legend in the mouths of great ladies, the story of his one fortune, among the others of that flotation, expanded into fame.

The story rose beneath him like a tide ; it floated him out of his suburb into a new and a greater world ; it floated him at last into the majestic councils of the nation. It all but bestowed upon him an imperishable name among the Statesmen of England.

CHAPTER IV

DEEP in the Surrey hills, and long secluded from the world, there runs a drowsy valley known to the rustics whom it nurtures as the Vale of Caterham.

Of late years our English passion for the country-side has discovered this enchanted spot ; a railway has conveyed to it those who were wise enough to seize early upon its subtle beauties, and the happy homes of a population freed from urban care are still to be seen rising upon every sward. Here Purley, which stands at the mouth of the Vale, Kenley, Warlingham and Caterham Stations receive at morning and discharge at evening the humbler breadwinners whom economic circumstance compels to absent themselves from the haunting woods of Surrey during the labours of the day. Some few, more blest, in mansions more magnificent, can contemplate throughout untroubled hours the solemn prospect of the hills.

Here it was that Mr. Clutterbuck was building the new home.

The sense of proportion which had always marked his life and had contributed so largely to his financial success, was apparent upon every side. He was content with some seven acres of ground, chosen in the deepest recess of the dale, and, since water is rare upon that chalk, he was content with but a small lake of graceful outline, and of no more than eighteen inches in depth ; in the midst an island, destined with time to bear a clump of exotic trees, stood for the moment a bare heap of whitish earth diversified rather than hidden by a few leafless saplings.

The house itself had been raised with business-like rapidity under the directions of Mrs. Clutterbuck herself, who had the wisdom to employ in all but the smallest details, an architect recommended by the Rev. Isaac Fowle.

The whole was in the taste which the sound domestic sense of modern England has substituted for the gloomy stucco and false Italian loggias of our fathers. The first storey was of red brick which time would mellow to a glorious and harmonious colour; the second was covered with roughcast, while the third and fourth appeared as dormer windows in an ample roof containing no less than fifteen gables. The chimneys were astonishingly perfect examples of Somersetshire heading, and the woodwork, which was applied in

thin strips outside the main walls of the building, was designed in the Cheshire fashion, with draw-pins, tholes and spring-heads tinctured to a sober brown. The oak was imported from the distant Baltic and strengthened with iron as a precaution against the gape and the warp.

The glass, which was separate from the house and stood in a great dome and tunnel higher up on the hillside where it sheltered the Victoria Regia, the tobacco plant, the curious and carnivorous *Hepteryx Rawlinsonia*, the palm and the common vine. A lodge guarded both the northern and the southern entrances and a considerable approach swept up past the two greyhounds which dignified the cast-iron gates; themselves a copy, upon a smaller scale, of the more famous Guardini's at Bensington, while the main door was of pure elm studded with one hundred and fifty-three large nails. The rooms within were heated not only by fireplaces of exquisite decoration, but also secretly by pipes which ran beneath the floors and had this inconvenience, that the captious, withdrawing from the fierceness of the blaze to some distant margin of the apartment, would marvel at the suffocating heat which struck them in the chance corner of their retirement.

Of the numerous bath-rooms fitted in copper and Dutch tiles, of the chapel, the vesting chamber and

the great number of bedrooms—many with dressing-rooms attached—I need not speak.

The stables were connected with the mansion by a covered way, which the guests could use in all weathers when there was occasion to visit the stables and to admire Aster, West Wind, Cœur de Lion, Ex Calibur, Abde-el-Kader, and the little pink pony, Pompey, which was permanently lame, but had caught Mrs. Clutterbuck's eye at Lady Moreton's sale, and had cost no less than 250 guineas.

"The Plâs" was the simple name suggested somewhat later by Charlie Fitzgerald, but for the moment Mr. and Mrs. Clutterbuck, well acquainted with the hesitation of all cultured people to adopt pretentious names for their residences, were content to leave it unchristened, and to allude to it among their acquaintance by nothing more particular than the beautiful title of "Home."

In the spring of 1911 the last drier had been applied to the walls, and with the early summer of that year Mr. Clutterbuck and his wife sat before the first fire upon their new hearth. It was a fire of old ship logs, and they were delighted to confirm the fact that it produced small particoloured flames.

If it be wondered why a fortune of barely half a million should have been saddled with so spacious

a building, it must be replied that a large part of every important income must of necessity be expended in luxury, and that the form of luxury which most appealed to this hospitable and childless pair was a roof under which they might later entertain numerous gatherings of friends, while, to those long accustomed during the active period of life to somewhat cramped surroundings, ease of movement and spacious apartments are a great and a legitimate solace in declining years. Here Mr. Clutterbuck, did he weary of his study, could wander at ease into the morning-room; from thence to the picture gallery which adjoined the well-lit hall, or if he chose to pursue his tour he could find the peacock-room, the Japanese room, the Indian room, and the Henri Quatre Alcove and Cosy Corner, and the Jacobean Snuggery awaiting him in turn. Had he been a younger man he would probably have added a swimming-bath; as it was, the omission of this appendage was all that marred the splendid series of apartments.

Doubtless he had overbuilt, as ordinary standards of wealth are counted, but the standards of financial genius are not those of commerce, and this very excess it was which brought him the first beginnings of his public career. It was impossible that display upon such a scale and so near London, should not

attract the attention of households at once well-born and generous. Our political world is ever ready to admit to the directing society of the nation those whose prudence and success in business have shown them worthy of undertaking the task of government. In the height of the season, as Mr. and Mrs. Clutterbuck were sitting at their breakfast, a little lonely in the absence of any guests in that great house, the lady's post was found to contain an invitation from no less a leader of London than the widow of Mr. Barttelot Smith.

* * * * *

Mary Smith had about her every quality that entitled her to lead the world, which she in fact did lead with admirable power. She had been born a Bailey. Her mother was a Bunting; she was therefore of that well established middle rank which forms perhaps the strongest core in our governing class. Her husband, Barttelot Smith, of Bar Harbour, Maine, and the New Bessemer, Birmingham, Alabama, had died in 1891, after a very brief married life, which had barely sufficed to introduce him to the Old Country and a world of which the hours and the digestion were quite unsuitable to him.

The fortune of which his widow was left in command after her bereavement was ample for the

part it was her genius to play; and though her means were not of that exaggerated sort to which modern speculation has accustomed us, yet her roomy house in St. James's Place, her Scotch forest, the two places in Cumberland, and the place she rented in the heart of the Quorn permitted her to entertain upon a generous scale; while large and historic but cosy Habberton on the borders of Exmoor afforded a secure retreat for the few weeks in August, which, if she were in England, she devoted to the society of her intimates.

She was a woman of high culture, the intimate friend of the Prime Minister—not as a politician, but as a poet—and through her sister, Louise, the sister-in-law of the leader of the Opposition, whose extraordinary polo play in the early eighties had endeared him to the then lively girl much more than could family ties.

Such other connections as she had with the political world were quite fortuitous. Her aunt, Lady Steyning, had seen, of course, the most brilliant period of the Viceroyalty in India, before the recent deplorable situation had destroyed at once the dignity and the leisure of that post; while a second aunt, the oldest of the three surviving Duchesses of Drayton, though living a very retired life at Molehurst, naturally brought her into touch with the Ebbworths and all the Rusper group of

old Whig families, from young Lord Rusper, to whom she was almost an elder sister, to the rather disreputable, but extremely wealthy, Ockley couple, whom she chivalrously defended through the worst of the storm.

It would be a great error to imagine that this charming and tactful woman found her interests in such a world alone—she was far too many sided for that. Her collection of Fragonards had many years ago laid at her feet the whole staff of the Persian Embassy, and opened an acquaintance with a world of Oriental experience; with it she discovered and cultivated the two chief Eastern travellers of our time, Lord Hemsbury and Mr. Teak; upon quite another side her modest but sincere and indefatigable interest in the lives of the poor had naturally led to a warm understanding between herself and Lord Lambeth—the indefatigable empire builder whom the world had known as Mr. Barnett of the M'Korio, and who now, as the aged Duke of Battersea, had earned by his unceasing good deeds, the half-playful, half-reverend nickname of "Peabody Yid" among the younger members of his set.

It was not a little thing to have gained the devotion of such a man, and it was, in a sense, the summit of Mary Smith's achievement: but she was more than a sympathetic and universal friend; she was

also—as such friends must always be—a power in both Political parties—and perhaps in three.

It was said—I know not with how much justice—that young Pulborough (who was his own father) owed his Secretaryship of State more to her direct influence than to his blood relationship to the aunt by marriage of her second brother-in-law, The MacClure; and there were rumours, certainly exaggerated, that when the Board of Trade was filled after Illingsbury had fled the country, Paston's marriage with her niece Elizabeth had decided his appointment.

I am careful to omit any reference to the Attorney-General of the day—it was mere gossip—nor will I tarry upon her brother at the Home Office, or her Uncle Harry at Dublin Castle, lest I should lead the reader to imagine that her well-earned influence depended on something other than her great soul and admirable heart.

It was a generous impulse in such a woman to send the large gilt oblong of pasteboard which was the key to her house, and to a seat at her board, to the lonely and now ageing couple in their retirement in the Caterham Valley. But Mrs. Smith, even in her most heartfelt and spontaneous actions, had always in view the nature of our political institutions. The sudden fortune of Mr. Clutterbuck had no doubt been exaggerated in the numerous

conversations upon it which had enlivened her drawing-room; if so, it was an error upon the right side, and her instinct told her that she could not be much to blame in giving such a man the opportunity to enter into the fuller life of his country.

Every rank in our carefully ordered society has its conventions; one, which will doubtless appear ridiculous to many of my readers, is that which forbids, among the middle classes, the extension of a warm invitation to people whom one never happens to have seen. The basis for this suburban convention it would be impossible to discover, but then, convention is not logical; and whatever may be the historic origin of the fetich, certain it is that most of our merchants and professional men would never dream of asking a Cabinet minister or a peer to their houses until at least a formal introduction had passed between them and the statesman so honoured.

The converse is not true at all; our public men would accept or reject such an invite as convenience dictated, and would hardly remember whether they had the pleasure of an acquaintance or no: they approach men of lesser value with unaffected ease and find it difficult to tolerate the strict ritual of a narrower class; but their own society, as they would be the first to admit, has its own body of unreasoning etiquette, the more difficult to recognise because it

is so familar ; Buffle himself, for instance, would hardly tolerate a question in Parliament upon his recent escapade.

The varying codes of varying strata of society are the cause of endless misunderstandings ; such a misunderstanding might have arisen now, but once again it was a woman that saved the jar. Mary Smith had unwittingly gone near to the line of offence, in the eyes of Mr. Clutterbuck at least, when she posted her well-meant card for July 2. Mrs. Clutterbuck had not only a wider social experience than her husband, but could also rely upon the instinctive psychology of her sex. She overruled at once, and very wisely, the petty objections of her husband to the form in which the acquaintance had been offered them, and returned, by the morning's post in the third person and upon pink paper, an acceptance to the kindly summons.

There were three weeks only in which to anticipate and prepare for this novel experience, but they were three weeks during which Mr. Clutterbuck was so thoroughly convinced by his wife, as very sincerely to regret the first comments he had made upon a custom to which his ignorance of life had made him take exception.

Meanwhile, in St. James's Place, the large and comfortable rooms which had once been those of the exiled Bourbons and later of the Boxing Club

were the scene of more than one conversation between Mary Smith and her friends in the matter of those whom Charlie Fitzgerald lightly called "the mysterious guests."

"The less mysterious they are to you," said Mary Smith, nodding at this same Charlie Fitzgerald one very private afternoon at tea, "the better for you." She shut her lips and nodded again at him with emphasis.

"Oh Lord! Mary," said Charlie Fitzgerald, "is it going to be another of them?"

He was twenty years and more her junior, but she tolerated anything from the son of her favourite cousin; besides which, every one called her Mary, and if she was to be called Mary she would as soon be called Mary by an intimate younger relation as by the crowd of chance men and women of her own age who used her name so freely.

"Yes," went on Mrs. Smith with decision, "it's going to be another of them; and this time I hope you'll stick."

Her trim little body was full of energy as she said it, and her face full of determination.

"It's never been my fault," said Fitzgerald reproachfully. "Was it my fault that Isaacs got into trouble, or that old Burpham lost his temper about the motor-car?"

"The last was your fault certainly," answered his

cousin vivaciously. "If you take a man's money, you mustn't use his motor-car without his leave."

"He's an old cad," yawned Fitzgerald lazily.

"Every one knows that," said Mrs. Smith, "and no one thinks the better of you for not understanding an old cad. It's a private secretary's business to understand. . . . You won't get anything from me, anyhow, I can tell you."

"You've said that before," said Charlie, looking down at her with a smile.

"Yes, and I have kept it, too," said Mary.

To which he answered with some emphasis: "By God you have!" and looking out into the trees in the Green Park he fell into a reverie, the monotone of which was his large and increasing indebtedness. It did not trouble him, but it furnished a constant food for his thoughts and lent him just that interest in the acquirement of money which his Irish character perhaps needed.

Later, as the room filled with callers, the conversation upon the Clutterbucks became more general. A certain Mr. Higginson, who was very smart indeed and wrote for the papers, was able to give the most precise information: Old Clutterbuck had been worth four millions; he'd dropped a lot on house property in Paris. He was worth nearly three anyhow, but he was a miserly old beggar. He had made it by frightening Charley Hatton.

At this all of his audience were pleased and several laughed.

"I'd frighten the beggar for less than four millions," said Charlie Fitzgerald. He spread out his arms and made a loud roaring noise to show how he'd do it, to the huge amusement of an aged general who loved youth and high spirits, but to the no small annoyance of Mr. Higginson, who hated being interrupted.

"Nonsense!" said Mary Smith, pouring out tea for a new caller in the old familiar way (she detested a pack of servants and kept hers for the most part in the double-decked basement underground). "Nonsense! I believe he made it perfectly honestly. He's got a dear old face!"

Mary Smith had never seen his face, but a good word is never thrown away.

"He's got an old hag of a wife," blurted out the General, "an old——"

Mary Smith put up her hand. "Now do be careful—you used that word only last Thursday."

"Good Lord!" said Charlie Fitzgerald; "what a long time." And the General and he, who had lunched together that same day, were amused beyond the ordinary at the simple jest.

"I've never seen his wife," said Mary Smith severely and with perfect truth. "She's probably just like everybody else. You people make up

ideas in your heads about classes that don't exist. Everybody's just like everybody else. . . . Look at old Bolney!"

"Damned if he's like anybody else!" said Miss Mosel, taking her cigarette out of her mouth and picking a long shred of yellow tobacco from her underlip at the same time. "Mamma calls him Cow Bolney."

"She's quite wrong, my dear, thoroughly wrong," said the old General fussily. "I wouldn't have believed it of your mother. I knew her when she was your age."

"Don't believe it now," said Mary Smith soothingly, "Victoria tells lies."

"No, I don't," said Miss Mosel stolidly. "Anyhow I'm coming to see old Clutterbuck."

"Not if I know it," said Mary Smith grimly.

"Oh, I don't mean at dinner," caught up Victoria Mosel lightly. "I wouldn't rag anybody's dinner, but you can't prevent my coming on, after."

Mrs. Smith gazed at her imploringly. "Don't play the fool, Vic," she begged.

"I shan't play the fool," said Victoria. "I only want to look on: I won't touch."

"Who you goin' to get?" asked Charlie.

"Well, there's *you*," spreading out her fingers in what had been for half a lifetime a pretty affectation

of hers, and ticking them off. "And there's old Mother D. of Drayton, and I shall try to get the Duke."

"Oh, your perpetual Peabody Yid," began Charlie.

"Don't," said his cousin, laughing with great charm.

"Well, yes, the Duke, and I've got *him* already," she said pointing to the General. "And . . . and I must have William."

Vic Mosel and Mr. Higginson shouted together: "Risking William! Oh! I say!" while Charlie's eye gleamed at the mention of her brother's name and he gloated on the prospect of a really good shindy.

"Oh, fiddlesticks-ends," said Mary Smith. "He's a white man: besides some one must do host for me. *You're* too green" (she said that to Fitzgerald), "and he'll behave all right. I'll warn him."

"Then," she went on hurriedly, "then there's Mrs. Carey and her mother, and the Steynings—I can't remember the whole lot. Perkins would tell you. There's sixteen, I know that."

"I'll hold the sponge for William Bailey," said Charlie solemnly; "the General supports the Duke."

"If there's any row," said Mary Smith to him

vigorously, "I shall know who started it, and who will lose by it. William's a dear."

And so the flashing talk went round, while, with Mr. Clutterbuck in the Caterham glens, the hours crept on towards an appointed day; and the horses were exercised and the motors ran, and the lake slowly filled, and parties, a little larger with each succeeding week, groups of their old friends and of their new, met and drank champagne at lunch, at dinner, and at supper too, until June was ended.

The second of July was warm and fine: an open motor would have pleased Mr. Clutterbuck for the run to town,—but Mrs. Clutterbuck, Mrs. Clutterbuck knew! It was in the Limousine that they swept up the London Road, past the Palace and round into St. James's Place. Mr. Clutterbuck, who had long secretly wondered how those great houses upon the Park were approached at all, and who had half believed that some royal entry, hidden from the vulgar gaze, led into them, saw this great mystery solved: he was silent upon his discovery. He wondered whether one should tell the motor to go into the stables of the house, or what: and again Mrs. Clutterbuck knew. She left it for the motor man and the big flunkeys to thresh out between them.

When they were at table the many lights, the

much wine and the more talk entered her husband's soul and warmed it. The lights greatly pleased him ; the wine he drank freely. He was beginning to live.

He noted curiously the faces round the great table, and asked his neighbour the names of more than one ; that neighbour was Mrs. Carey, than whom he could have had no better guide, for she knew every face in London, to the number of two hundred or more. She pointed out the large, beneficent features of the Duke of Battersea where he sat at Mary Smith's right, hardly able to take his eyes from her face. Mr. Clutterbuck in his turn gazed long and with increasing awe at the man whose name stood for the power of England in so many distant harbours, and whose career in finance was the model and the envy of all his own society. He strained to listen and catch some word falling from his lips, but the hubbub was too loud. The bright young laughing face to his left was that of Charlie Fitzgerald, but he did not need the information, for Mary Smith had been careful to introduce the lad with an unmistakable intonation, and, as though by inadvertence, twice over. The tall, square-faced, whiskered, spectacled man opposite who sipped his soup as though every taste of it were to be thought out and appreciated, was, he learnt, Mr. William Bailey, the brother of his

hostess; and as Mrs. Carey told him that name, she laughed discreetly, for the eccentricities of Mr. William Bailey, though they were not always harmless, were never without point to women of Mrs. Carey's superficial character. She saw nothing in them but matter for her own amusement.

Nothing perhaps struck Mr. Clutterbuck more in the great society he had entered than the superb ease which distinguished it. Every member of that world seemed free to pursue his own appetite or inclination without restraint of form, and yet the whole was bound by just that invisible limit which is the framework of good breeding. Here on his right was Lord Steyning, talking at the top of his voice; a little nearer Charlie Fitzgerald was whispering across his neighbour, Miss Carey, to another guest whose name Mr. Clutterbuck did not know. The Duke of Battersea felt no necessity to talk to any one beside his hostess, or to take his eyes for more than a moment from her face; while Mr. William Bailey shocked no one by maintaining a perfect silence, and staring gloomily through his spectacles at a "Reynolds" of his great grandfather, the Nabob, which he had frequently declared in mixed company to be a forgery. It was this atmosphere of freedom that gave Mr. Clutterbuck his chief pleasure in an evening which

he heartily, thoroughly, and uninterruptedly enjoyed.

When the women had gone away and the men were sitting at their ease, with the silent William Bailey for host, a maze of acute interest surrounded the merchant; he could hear the Duke of Battersea, a little grumpy in the absence of the hostess, praising Lord Steyning to his face for the arrangement of his garden, and turning his back on Mr. Bailey, which gentleman, speaking for almost the first time that evening, shoved up close to Mr. Clutterbuck and maintained his character for oddity by asking how he liked the Peabody Yid.

Mr. Clutterbuck, uncertain whether this were a novel, a play, or a new game, but unwilling to betray his ignorance, said that it depended upon taste.

"It does," said Mr. Bailey, with emphasis; "it's a jolly house, isn't it?"

Mr. Clutterbuck affirmed the grandeur and admirable appointment of the house, but he could not help wondering whether William Bailey would have been more pleased if he had found something to criticise. Then, as Charlie Fitzgerald turned to talk to Mr. Clutterbuck, William Bailey relapsed again into his silence, an attitude of mind which he diversified in no way save by pulling out a pencil and sketching, with some exaggeration of

the ears, nape, and curled ringlets, the back view presented to him by the venerable Duke of Battersea.

Upstairs, Mary Smith, squatting familiarly beside Mrs. Clutterbuck, giggled into her private ear with that delightful familiarity which had ever put her guests into her intimate confidence, and swept away every vestige of *gêne* and of disparity in status. This charm of manner it was for which those whom she still honoured chiefly loved her, and which those whom she had seen fit to drop most poignantly regretted.

Upon Mrs. Clutterbuck, as she reclined on a Tutu Louis XVII., in an attitude full of charm and of repose yet instinct with self-control, the spell of Mary Smith was powerful indeed. Her talk was of the great—and of their secretaries. She remembered stories of ambassadors, and of their secretaries as well; and in what she had to say concerning Secretaries of State, yet other secretaries of these secretaries appeared—unpaid secretaries and under-secretaries, parliamentary secretaries, and common negligible secretaries who did secretarial work. The functions, position, and weight of a secretary had never seemed so clear to Mrs. Clutterbuck before; nay, until that moment she had given but little heed to the secretary's trade. She saw it now.

But all this was done so deftly and with such tact, and interrupted with such merry little screams of laughter; in the course of it Mrs. Clutterbuck was herself compelled to make so many confidences that the atmosphere was one of mutual information, and the guest was confident that she had contributed more than the hostess. When Mary Smith moved off to play general post with the guests, and, as her charming phrase went, "to make them to talk to one another," Mrs. Clutterbuck found how singularly less a woman of the world was Mrs. Smith's somewhat prudish aunt, Lady Steyning, long at Simla, some time our ambassadress at Washington, and now about to be at the head of the Embassy in Paris. As for Mrs. Carey, Mrs. Clutterbuck regarded her with loathing.

Downstairs Charlie Fitzgerald had been drinking port, and, keeping his right hand firmly fixed upon the neck of the decanter, he had poured out wine at intervals for Mr. Clutterbuck with a gesture which he falsely termed "passing the bottle." He had not his cousin's manner or science in the handling of a conversation, but the wine, though bad, was a bond between them; they drank it largely, especially Fitzgerald: it enabled him to recite with passion and Mr. Clutterbuck to receive with faith, anecdotes of yet another batch of secretaries, and of Mr. Fitzgerald's own adventures in his confidential relations

with the discredited Isaacs and the aged but irascible Lord Burpham; a last engagement which he had apparently terminated from his fixed decision to undertake no such work in the future, but to live the live of a private gentleman, and possibly to enter the House of Commons.

It was impossible for Mr. Clutterbuck not to contrast again the spontaneity and ease of the world round him with the much more sterile associations of his middle and later manhood. Nor did anything please him more in that ease and spontaneity than the Irish good nature with which Charlie Fitzgerald poured at his feet his wealth of social experience, and especially his experience in that secretarial phase which Mr. Clutterbuck sincerely regretted that he should have entirely abandoned. He could not help thinking, as he looked at the handsome curly head and merry eyes, and as he heard the names of the great and good flash constantly from the lips before him, how perfect would that arrangement be which should permit some humbler but similar man to be to him what Charlie Fitzgerald seemed to have been to the eminent financier and the hot-tempered politician; a-second-and-a-younger-eye-and-brain.

As they came into the drawing-room together, they were already fast friends, and such was the effect of the atmosphere about him and the exhila-

rating evening he had passed, that Mrs. Smith found it quite impossible to make her Clutterbuck speak to any one save his new-found acquaintance : a disappointment to those ladies who had heard exaggerated accounts of his wealth, and were already interested in his crescent-shaped moustaches and the fan of grey hair which he displayed over his considerable forehead.

Mr. Clutterbuck noticed with some astonishment —if anything could astonish him now—the entry of further guests at a late hour. They came, as it seemed to him, without introduction and without ceremonial. And he wondered, as he followed the imperial carriage and gestures of Victoria Mosel among the rest, whether he also in some future year might be found drifting thus through open doors free from the weary necessities of etiquette. He doubted it.

They left at half-past eleven, and all the way home Mrs. Clutterbuck complained of fatigue. But her husband, upon his arrival, felt it necessary to continue the evening, and far into the early morning drank yet more port, and considered the change in his life.

CHAPTER V

THE season was not yet over. Mrs. Clutterbuck had called upon Mary Smith,—and if my readers will believe me,—Mary Smith had called upon Mrs. Clutterbuck. And there had come a morning—Parliament was still sitting, the Goodwood Cup was not yet collared—when Mrs. Clutterbuck having heard for weeks past from Mr. Clutterbuck hints and guesses at the necessity for a secretary to deal with his now numerous invitations and engagements, quietly suggested Charlie Fitzgerald.

Had she suggested Tolstoi or the German Emperor she could not have surprised him more. But when he heard that the proposition had come from the family itself, that it had been largely due to Mr. Fitzgerald's own pronounced affection, and that he would be content with a nominal salary of £400 or £500 a year, Mr. Clutterbuck, though as much astonished as a man rapt into heaven, was convinced of the reality of the business, and the only thing that troubled him was the question of salary.

He paced up and down the room, suggesting to his wife the dilemma that a sum of £1000 or £1500 a year was all the expense he would hesitate to incur, while less would be an insult he would hesitate to offer. To which her only and sharp reply was that the young man could surely look after himself; that doubtless he had grown used to work of this sort and liked it, that he probably had means of his own, and that, anyhow, it had come from him, and that Mrs. Smith herself had spoken strongly in favour of the arrangement.

How long such a change might last only Fate could tell. It was the middle of the summer. When there were no more dinners to eat and no more women to talk to, Charlie Fitzgerald, all life and boxes, came down to Caterham, but not before going the round of some twenty-eight tradesmen in St. James's Street and Mayfair and assuring them that until the autumn he would be abroad.

With the entry of that vigorous young Irish life into Mr. Clutterbuck's home, began the last adventures of the merchant's singularly adventurous life and his introduction to the conflicting destinies of his country; for even if things had not bent that way, something in Charlie Fitzgerald's nature would have left him restless until he and those for whom he worked had struck some mark.

The young Irishman was the son of that Doctor

Fitzgerald the oculist, who had been during all the later years of Queen Victoria's reign a link, as it were, between the professional and the political world of London, and who was himself a younger son of Sir Daniel Fitzgerald, the permanent head of the Fisheries whose name appears so frequently in Lady Cotteswold's Memoirs of Prince Albert and the Queen's early married life. Lady Fitzgerald, his wife, had been a Bailey, and the aunt, therefore, of Mrs. Smith.

It had not been thought necessary to dower her with any portion of the great Bailey fortune, for in those days the Irish land upon which Sir Daniel had foreclosed was a very ample provision even for onerous social duties in London, and the Baileys asked nothing of the eager lover but that he should adopt the name of Fitzgerald which had for centuries been associated with the estate his ardent forethought had acquired.

In those days a change of name demanded certain formalities; these were soon fulfilled, and in Charlie's generation, the third to bear the Irish title and arms, the original form "Daniel Daniels" was justly forgotten.

Since the days of Sir Daniel Irish land has passed through a revolution, especially when it has been held by those whose duties did not necessitate a visit to their estates. Sir Daniel's heir, the

oculist's eldest brother, would have died impoverished had not the Government very properly succoured the son of so distinguished a Civil servant and created for him the post of Inspector in the Channel Islands (with the exception of Sark), a district in which he was understood to be present twice or even three times in a year. This salary died of course with its incumbent; his brother, the oculist, had been compelled to spend in hospitality his exceptional earnings, and the present generation of young men, sons of either brother, had had to face life unguarded.

It was not an easy position for boys used to the conversation and habits of the wealthiest society in the world. But much was done for them. Edward was married to the half-witted daughter of Sir John Garstang the cotton-spinner; Henry was put into the Scotch Education Office; Philip died, and Charlie, in spite of the mistake about Mr. Isaacs, would have done very well out of Lord Burpham if his incorrigible Irish character had not run away with him and with the motor-car of that eminent director of our Foreign Affairs. "Irish," I say, for Ireland was apparent in all that poor Charlie did, for though his mother was of pure German stock and strongly Protestant, while his accent was that of Eton College, yet his friends could easily descry in all his extravagances and

escapades the adventurous Irish influence of his grandfather's estate. His cousins, through the Baileys (who were of pure English or Indian lineage), Jim in the Foreign Office and "Nobby" who had means and was, after a spell in the Heralds' College, at large, the Steynings and the rest, saw this Hibernian brilliance more clearly than any, and made it a permanent if insufficient excuse for his vagaries.

It was Boswell Delacourt who first suggested politics to Charlie Fitzgerald, and Fate did the rest.

Boswell Delacourt was not exactly a relative of Charlie Fitzgerald's, except in so far as everybody can be said to be related to everybody else; he was no more than a connection by marriage. But he did think it hard that a man of Mr. Clutterbuck's antecedents and position should stand aloof from political life. Nowhere can money be more usefully spent for the country than in the support of great political ideals, and nowhere can the wide experience and hard mental training of a commercial career do more for England than in the House of Commons. Nor did any one appreciate these truths more than Boswell Delacourt, nor did any of the younger people who were working in the organisation of the National Party work harder than he to spread them abroad. He hammered at Fitzgerald, and Fitzgerald did his duty.

The new Secretary had passed the whole summer without a word of complaint, cooped up in the new house at Caterham ; he had spent his energies in suggesting the purchase of books, the removal of pictures, and the renaming of the estate ; he had recommended horses, cigars, wines, traps, motors, and jewellery, and sold them again with ready decision when he thought them unworthy ; he had attended to all the correspondence, signed nearly all the cheques, received payment against all exchanges, and spared his host every sort of financial worry ; he had compelled not a few of his own friends, in spite of their intense reluctance, to spend Saturday to Monday under that roof ; with noble perseverance he had run the light Panhard himself for incredible distances and at a speed which Mr. Clutterbuck could hardly bear ; he had done all these things for nearly two months without a respite, when, late in September, having forsworn all opportunities to shoot, he tackled the great affair.

It was in the second smoking-room some time before dinner that the elder man and the younger, sipping sherry and bitters, began their fateful conversation.

Charlie Fitzgerald first introduced the business, and he launched it fair and clean, for when Mr. Clutterbuck had said in a ruminating sort of way :

"The days are drawing in, Mr. Fitzgerald," Charlie Fitzgerald had answered :

"Yes—— Why don't you send something to the Party Funds ?"

Since his secretary had been in the house, Mr. Clutterbuck had authorised not a few large cheques, and had let Charlie sign many more. He wondered what new claim this might be, but he hardly liked to venture an opinion. He thought it better to wait a moment and let time or the goddess Chance illuminate him.

"You see, after all," said Fitzgerald, spreading out one hand towards the fire, "they expect it . . . don't they ?" he asked sympathetically, looking up sideways in Mr. Clutterbuck's face.

"Yes," said Mr. Clutterbuck in a maze, "yes"—thoughtfully—"I suppose they do." But who they were, or what it was they expected, torture could not have got out of him.

"Well—you see——" went on Charlie in the tone of interest and thought which men adopt when they are putting a proposition carefully to another, "it's only natural they should. You can't carry on either of the great Parties for nothing, and lots of men expect to get everything out of politics and to put nothing in ; and then there are others who don't care about being in the movement. It's a difficult job altogether." Then he added in a

thoroughly different tone: "They were in a damned tight hole in '95!"

"Yes, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the older man again. He had appreciated by this time perhaps one quarter of the affair.

"Bozzy," went on Fitzgerald, "Bozzy says that it goes up and down like a Jack-in-the-box. One election hardly anything, and then before they know where they are—millions! But I don't believe it"—he wagged his head wisely and leaned back again—"don't believe a word of it. There must always be a balance in hand, and a fat one too. Think of it!" he went on, "think of all it's got to *do*— Damn elections! They only come once in five years anyhow. Look at all that's got to go on meanwhile? You can't advertise for nothing, and you can't print for nothing, and you can't get men to start newspapers, that don't pay, in Egypt for nothing; and you can't get your information abroad and in America for nothing. It's all rubbish to say that they let it go fut! It is true they get in a hole sometimes. And I say they were both in a hole in '95."

Mr. Clutterbuck still sat silent.

"You will say," continued Fitzgerald rapidly after a short interval, as he stood up against the mantelpiece with his back to the fire, "you'll say——"

"No, I won't," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "I assure you, Mr. Fitzgerald, I shall put no obstacle in the way of such a decision."

"Well—but," returned his secretary, "you see it really must be explained—you can't leap in the dark."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Clutterbuck with determination.

"That's it," said Charlie Fitzgerald, dropping his chin and looking profoundly at the carpet.

There was a considerable interval of silence, and Mr. Clutterbuck, who fully appreciated that this new world was not the lucid world of commerce, or, rather, that it had a language of its own with which he was not yet familiar, forebore to ask a question. Nay, it would have puzzled him very considerably to frame a question so that it should relate to anything intelligible, human or divine. But as Charles Fitzgerald remained quite silent, the merchant did venture to suggest that he would gladly and heartily do anything that was expected of him in the matter.

"Yes, I know," said Fitzgerald, pacing towards the window. "I wasn't bothering about that. I'm sure you would. But I was thinking which Party. . . . You see, in the old days," he said, suddenly facing round, "it was simple enough: you had your set and your set went Whig, and it

was all plain sailing, but then the old days were beastly corrupt, and what a man spent he liked to spend on his own people. There's a place over the hill there," he said, jerking his head backwards towards Gatton, "where my great uncle's father-in-law was—seven electors and £20,000. But they won't tolerate that now. So there you are! You got to ask yourself which Party. Then there's another trouble: there used to be only two Parties; now they're five, and look like seven."

Mr. Clutterbuck's mind moved forward by one cog, and he saw that the talk had something to do with the nuances of the House of Commons. He let Fitzgerald go on, but he could have wished that young man of breeding would make himself clearer, unless, indeed, this method of address were native or in some way necessary to exalted rank.

"Bozzy says," began Fitzgerald, "there are really only two party-funds again, now the National Party's kept going two years, and I 'spose he's right. Nobody gives to the Irish except the Irish, and that's a sort of audit sheet business, like the Labour people. And the Radicals haven't got a regular organisation. Then, of course, you might say, 'Why not give to both?' like the Stanfords."

"Who are the Stanfords, Mr. Fitzgerald?" broke in the master of the house, clutching like a drowning man at a straw.

"Lord Stanford and his wife," said Charlie Fitzgerald innocently. "Old Bill Lewisohn that was; they call it Lewis and Lewis still."

"Oh yes," said Mr. Clutterbuck humbly.

"Well," said Fitzgerald, getting his second wind, "as I say, you might say 'Why not give to both, like the Stanfords?' Frankly, I don't think it pays. He gives to the Opposition, anyway he *did* give to the Opposition before the General Election because of the peerage; and she gives to the Nationals *now* because of the Church Bill. But it doesn't pay. They don't get half the attention either of 'em would get singly. Besides which," he added, "a man must consult his convictions. Course he must."

"Yes, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Clutterbuck, who now at last perceived that the elements of the tangle consisted of a sum of money, his political convictions, and the Party system. "I've never concealed mine. I was a Conservative as long as I took any interest in politics. But the 1906 administration was a good one; the 1908 was a better. Then when this Coalition came I was hard at work and not bothering about politics: I suppose I'd have gone National. But not altogether, you know; and as for the first tariff—well, I'm out of business now, and I suppose I oughtn't to lose my temper. As one gets older," he added wearily, "one cares much less about these things."

"That's it," said Fitzgerald suddenly, determined to keep it alight. "You're ab-so-lute-ly right . . . it's just because practical business men know the harm the first tariff did, that the Nationals want their help—help o' men like *you*. Rubber, for instance: Congo rubber. After all, you know more about it than twenty of the politicians put together. I tell you what," he added, "buzz down with me to-morrow and see Bozzy—Bozzy Delacourt. He's a sort of relation of mine, and he'll tell you a lot more about it than I could. We wouldn't have to go to the head offices in Peter Street: he'll give us lunch. I'll telephone through to him." And the happy but loquacious fellow went out upon that errand.

Mr. Clutterbuck, left alone to his own thoughts, carefully unravelled them and picked them out clearly strand from strand: that he was expected, to his own advantage, to subscribe a sum of money; that he was expected to subscribe it to a political party; that a man called Bozzy, who was also called Delacourt, was in the inner ring of such affairs, and that of the two Parties it would best suit a merchant of his standing to tender such financial support, through the said Bozzy, to the Party in power.

When he had put the thing thus to himself it seemed much simpler; he was prepared for the business before him, and next day Delacourt's per-

fectly lucid and very straightforward manner finished the affair. He found that so small a sum as a thousand pounds was received on behalf of the great organisation with the greatest dignity and courtesy, and that his support was as warmly acknowledged as though he had given twenty times that sum. When the formality was over, Delacourt, detaining him over the wine, said gravely :

"We all have to do what we can, Mr. Clutterbuck, but the real loss to the New Tariff nowadays isn't in money. You all come forward most generously. Our trouble is that we can't get the candidates we used to. We can't get the Old Commercial Member who could drive it down in the House with fact and grip and experience. We couldn't ask a man like you to stand, for instance, Mr. Clutterbuck, because the work has got so hard ; but it's a great pity. It all gets handed over to the young journalists and the lawyers." He went on to rattle off with ease and familiarity a dozen great names in the City connected with the Liberal benches and with the Conservative in the old free trade days, names that were the names of gods to the astonished Mr. Clutterbuck, who had never heard them pronounced in so everyday a fashion before.

"There's where you'd have been in the old days,

Mr. Clutterbuck," said Bozzy with ardour, "but we wouldn't dare to ask you now."

In Mr. Clutterbuck's experience this was but a delicate way of telling him that a seat in Parliament was quite out of his reach. But the suggestion had moved him, and moved him profoundly. Of Parliament, of men who stood for Parliament, of the Northern manufacturers especially and their qualifications, of the London members, and of a hundred other similar things, he talked eagerly to Fitzgerald through the afternoon, as the Limousine shot back to the Surrey Hills.

That night Charlie Fitzgerald, before going to bed, wrote a note containing the simple information that the old blighter would take it out of the hand. Then he bethought himself of the danger of written messages and of the advantages of modern invention. He burnt the note, rang up Bozzy on the telephone, found him in no very good humour just back from a boring play, and informed him in bad French that he had no need to shoot further: the opossum would come down when he was called.

Four days later Mr. Clutterbuck received a lengthy and very careful letter upon the official paper of Peter Street. It contained a statement and a proposal, both highly confidential. The statement was to the effect that the borough of Mickleton in North London would very probably be vacant

in a few weeks; for what reasons could not easily be written. The proposition—made with infinite tact and with the most courteous recognition of the very high favour Mr. Clutterbuck would be doing the Party should he accede—was that he should accept the Prospective National Candidature at once in time to make himself familiar with the constituency, supposing always that the National Committee of that borough should be instructed by the General Meeting to urge their Executive Body to demand Mr. Clutterbuck's services.

The Opposition majority, Delacourt admitted, was a high one—no less than 851, as the books of reference would inform him. But a great part of this was due to the female vote, which had naturally been given to the Party who had pressed their claims during the recent administration; and though he did not pretend to prophesy victory, he could assure Mr. Clutterbuck that the proposition would never have been made to him had not the chances of victory been such as to make that proposal an honourable one.

As for Mr. Clutterbuck, he sat that night upon a throne.

* * * * *

To Mr. Clutterbuck the stages by which a man may enter the Representative Chamber were far from familiar. Charlie Fitzgerald had indulged in

political sport more than once, and though he would not compare it to motoring, or even to really good yachting, he confessed that it attracted him, and he would often go off for a day or two's electioneering when the occasion served, at the request of a friend; nay, on the last occasion he had given up a capital day's shooting to see cousin "Nobby" handsomely beaten in Derbyshire by 3286. It was excitement of which he did not easily tire. But as he described the first processes with gusto to Mr. Clutterbuck, that gentleman perceived that the road to Parliament was not as smooth or as simple as he had vaguely imagined: and of all the obstacles that lay between him and the final stages of a political career, none did he dread more than the first, which was fixed for October 5. For though the Mickleton National Committee had indeed, as Mr. Delacourt hoped, received orders for the General Meeting to instruct their Executive to approach the merchant, and though he had at once given a warm reply in the affirmative, it was still their public duty to examine Mr. Clutterbuck upon the orthodoxy of his political faith; it was this that appalled him. He prepared for the inquisition with sweat and agony. He read at Fitzgerald's order "The National Year Book," "A Thousand Points on Nationalism," "What is a Nationalist?" "Why I am a Nationalist," and was

relieving himself with "Platform Jokes" when he was bidden leave that useful compendium to a later stage. There would be little joking on October 5!

He very humbly and sincerely followed the instructions of his secretary in the details of the interrogators he would have to meet; he noted the foreign wrongs which he desired redressed, the wickedness of European Governments and their particular crimes, the domestic evils whose mere existence darkened the sun, and the personal habits which were expected of him—notably total abstinence. One thing above all he learnt; it was drummed into him till he knew it by heart; no matter what the committee might say or think, no matter what pressure he might suffer, he was to pledge himself boldly against his party in the matter of the Offences Disenfranchisement Bill.

On that Charlie was adamant. "It looks easy now," he said (alas! did it?); "but it may be the devil and all on the 5th of October."

What precisely the measure might be, Fitzgerald, who had himself not studied it minutely, thought it as well to leave aside. The simpler the manly reply, the better. He was sure it was the Government's one mistake.

The programme was thoroughly threshed out, often repeated, fixed, and as the fatal day approached,

Mr. Clutterbuck felt himself armoured; but not before he had, again on Charlie Fitzgerald's advice, written out, quite spontaneously, a note and a cheque for £100 to the United Sons of Endeavour. It was a religious association of young men which did strenuous work among the poor of Mickleton, distributed large sums every quarter in salaries to its vast organisation, and had upon its membership representatives of nearly every family of note in the borough.

October 5 was a glorious autumn day, and it was the open Renault which was chosen. The interview was to take place in the North Street schools at four; just after lunch Mr. Clutterbuck, already passably nervous, and Charlie Fitzgerald in the highest of high spirits, started northward.

As they left the more familiar parts of London behind them, and passed through miles of sordid and obscure streets, Mr. Clutterbuck's vitality steadily fell. Public engagements of every kind were ill suited to his temperament; the thought of public examination was abhorrent to him. He fortified himself by an occasional mental glance at his financial position and a comparison between it and that of the pigmies who would that day presume to be his Judges, but even this great balm for human woe hardly comforted him as the horrid perspective of North Street swung into view and the

car stopped with a jerk in front of the dreary wall of the schools.

He was glad, from the very bottom of his heart, to be accompanied by Charlie Fitzgerald, whose exceedingly good grey clothes, very curly brown hair and frank boyish eyes, would have been a protection to any man in an ordeal even more severe than that which Mr. Clutterbuck had to face.

For a few minutes they sat together in a little bare room furnished as to the floor with a dead stove without a fire, and as to the walls with a glazed picture for the instruction of the young—a picture representing an elephant in his natural colours, and underneath it in large letters:

EL-E-PHANT (Mammal)
This huge crea-ture is an in-hab-i-tant of our
In-di-an Em-pire.

At this work Mr. Clutterbuck mournfully gazed during his period of probation, whilst Charlie Fitzgerald first swung his clasped hands between his knees, then crossed his legs, leaned his head back, and hummed the old Gaiety *pas de quatre* which had rejoiced his boyhood.

Suddenly the door opened and Mr. Clutterbuck and his companion were gravely summoned into the presence of the Executive.

Of the various functions filled by an Executive, a

Committee, a Body of Workers, a Confederation, and a Deputation to Choose in the organisation of our public life, I will not here treat. The vast machinery of self-government, passionately interesting as it must be to all free men, would take me too far from the purpose of my narrative. It must be enough for the reader to know that five gentlemen and one lady, of very different complexions, garb and demeanours, sat in a semicircle on six Windsor chairs, in the schoolroom which Mr. Clutterbuck entered. He was suffering—oh ! suffering with the pangs men only experience upon reaching the turning-points of their lives. Upon this jury depended, not even his entry into the great council of the nation, but his bare opportunity for presenting himself as a candidate at all.

The chairman, or at any rate the gentleman who sat in the middle of the crescent, was a clergyman of gigantic stature, though of what denomination it would have been difficult to say, for above a Roman collar he carried an immense black beard, wore spectacles, and was bald. His voice was perhaps the most profound and awe-inspiring Mr. Clutterbuck had ever heard, and when he said, " Pray, gentlemen, be seated," it was as though a judge had pronounced sentence in the weightiest of criminal trials.

Mr. Clutterbuck felt uncertainly backwards for the chair which he hoped was there, found the

target and expected the issue in an attitude of misfortune. Charlie Fitzgerald sat down upon the chair next him, smiled at the half-moon of faces, and threw up his trenches to receive the attack.

"The first thing we have to ask you, Mr. Clutterbuck," boomed out the terrible hierarch, "is your attitude upon the Irish question?"

"My attitude upon the Irish question," said Mr. Clutterbuck, in a dry, unnatural voice, "is that of the great Mr. Gladstone."

Four of the male heads approved of this reply by various expressions and signs, and the lady by a series of enthusiastic little nods, intended to reassure the candidate whose embarrassment she sincerely pitied.

But a man of apparently captious temper at the end of the line, said:

"Ah, now, but at what periud of the old djentlemun?"

Mr. Clutterbuck, recognising the accent, replied eagerly, "At the period most closely associated with his name."

"That won't do f'r my boys," said the interrupter cheerfully, "n'r f'r anny uv the Orange Temperance League that *I* know, I can tell ye!"

And this was Mr. Clutterbuck's first introduction to the great truth that practical politics depend on compromise.

The Chairman bestowed a sorrowful look upon the gentleman from Ulster, and said severely:

"I *think*, Mr. Clutterbuck, most of us are satisfied with your reply."

Mr. Clutterbuck was grateful; he waited for the next question and braced himself to bear it. It was the lady who put it to him in a voice which some years earlier must have been a beautiful contralto, and which even yet retained notes of singular richness and power. She asked Mr. Clutterbuck in a manner suggesting persuasion rather than pressure, what his views might be upon the establishment of female courts of justice.

Mr. Clutterbuck replied that in this, as in every other matter concerning the sex, he should be guided by the opinion of the committee representing the lady electors.

"But I am here to represent the *Female* Committee," said the lady sweetly.

"Well, Ma'am," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "ahem! I suppose you represent their views?"

"Certainly," said the lady with decision and in her richest tones.

"Quite so, quite so," said Mr. Clutterbuck.

At this point Charlie Fitzgerald looked up and said quietly:

"I can assure you Mr. Clutterbuck is heartily in favour."

His interruption was not very palatable to the committee, who found it a diversion from the pleasures of the chase. The chairman frowned at him, and Charlie Fitzgerald smiled back sadly in return.

"Mr. Clutterbuck," came forth the deep voice again, "I have now to ask you the gravest question of all: How would you vote in the matter of temperance reform?"

"Mr. Clutterbuck," said Charlie Fitzgerald briskly, "is a total abstainer."

"We are not here, sir," said a barber who had not yet spoken, and who was a deeply religious man, "to hear you, but to hear Mr. Clutterbuck."

To which rebuke Charlie Fitzgerald had the imprudence to murmur in a low tone: "Oh, my God!"

Luckily the expression did not reach the stern half-moon of inquisitors, and Mr. Clutterbuck was free to reply that he had the most ardent and complete sympathy with temperance reform in all its aspects.

"But to take a specific instance," said the clergyman, wagging a forefinger at Mr. Clutterbuck and fixing him with his two glass eyes, "would you or would you not vote for Sir William Cattermole's Bill?"

"I would vote for it," said Mr. Clutterbuck in a

tone of ardent conviction, "though it should cost me my seat and the confidence of my party!"

A look of blank amazement passed over the clergyman's face, nor did any of the half circle smile, except the Orangeman, and he only with his eyes.

"You surely cannot have heard me aright," said the clergyman in astonishment and sorrow. "I said Sir William Cattermole's Bill. You would support that infamous measure?"

Charlie Fitzgerald was in a qualm, and it cannot be denied that Mr. Clutterbuck looked at him for aid and information. Like most honest men, Mr. Clutterbuck was not very ready to take hints or to observe expressions, but Charlie Fitzgerald's eyebrows were so unmistakable that he found his cue.

"You must have misunderstood me," he said. "My point was that I would vote for an amendment to that Bill though it should cost me my seat—that is," he added modestly, "supposing I had one."

After using this expression Mr. Clutterbuck was so miserable that the very publicans themselves would have pitied him had they seen the sweat gathering upon his temples, and the droop of his mouth which at every moment more and more resembled that of a child who is about to burst into tears.

"Well, Mr. Clutterbuck," said the chairman with a sigh, "that's not very satisfactory."

"No, it izunt," said the Orangeman offensively, though in a lower tone; while the lady, who had hitherto befriended the forlorn financier, now regarded him with a constrained reproach.

"I am afraid," stammered the unfortunate man, "that I must have expressed myself ill."

"No matter, Mr. Clutterbuck, no matter," said the chairman, lifting his hand benignly. "The time will come for all that, when this deplorable measure comes, if it ever does come, before the House. . . . And now, Mr. Clutterbuck," he added leaning forward, to the evident annoyance of his colleagues who desired to have a word, "what about the policy of Offences Disfranchisement?"

To the immense surprise of his six torturers, Mr. Clutterbuck, in a manly and decisive voice replied, or rather shouted:

"I will have nothing to do with it!"

"Ear-ear!" said the barber enthusiastically.

"Mr. Pickle," said the clergyman reprovingly, "your interruption is most improper."

"But the sentiment's all right," said a little man to the left of the chair, who had not yet spoken, and whose wizened face betrayed acute intelligence. He added: "And I con-gratulate you, Mr. Clutterbuck. You're a gentleman! What's more is

this; I shall be happy to shake you heartily by the hand when all o' this is over."

The lady on the extreme left wing was visibly annoyed, the clergyman appeared indifferent, while the one member of the executive who had hitherto maintained a complete silence, and who yet was no less a person than the husband of the representative of the female committee of Mickleton, copied his wife's demeanour with that exactitude which is the outward symbol of a happy union. They had no children.

Mr. Clutterbuck, in a tone still strong, but with something of the monotony which comes from frequent repetition, added :

"There are some things, gentlemen, on which a Democrat cannot swerve, and I cannot see, with due deference to the mixed opinion before me, how a Democrat could have answered other than I did."

Here doubts of grammar rushed into his mind and he was silent.

The wizened little man said : "That's all roight," and the barber beamed at him.

The clergyman, rising, said :

"Well, Mr. Clutterbuck, you've done us a great honour by meeting us, I'm sure. . . . We shall have to consider our decision. We will let you know, Mr. Clutterbuck. May I have the honour and the pleasure of shaking you by the hand ?"

Mr. Clutterbuck accorded him this felicity, and repeated it in the case of every other member of the crescent ; they had now broken their formation and were standing in various attitudes before him, the lady with a notable pride which became her female representative position, her husband with an extremely quiet dignity. The ordeal was over.

As Charlie Fitzgerald and he went out past the elephant and the dead stove into the open air, and when they were well out of earshot, Mr. Clutterbuck asked nervously :

"Was that all right, Mr. Fitzgerald ?"

For answer Fitzgerald felt in his breast pocket, looked really anxious and said :

"Good God ! I forgot to post that letter."

"What letter ?" asked Mr. Clutterbuck, a little pale.

"Nothing," said Fitzgerald, "nothing." He walked quickly to a pillar-box a few steps off, and dropped into it the envelope addressed to the United Sons of Endeavour which he should have posted the night before : his omission accounted for much, but he had rectified it and he knew that all would be well.

"It's all right," he said, slogging back, "but I was a big fool to forget it. That's the worst of being an Irishman," he added genially.

Mr. Clutterbuck was quite at sea. "But is it all *right*, Mr. Fitzgerald?" he insisted.

"It's all right *now*," said Fitzgerald. He hit his employer fairly in the back, jumped into the car and shouted for home.

Four days after a letter came to Caterham from the Acting Secretary of the Mickleton National Executive Deputation to choose.

It spoke in warm terms of Mr. Clutterbuck's character and genius, admitted differences of opinion upon more than one point and severely informed him at its close that he was admitted to the full title of Prospective National Candidate.

CHAPTER VI

In the height of that splendid London season which had seen Mr. Clutterbuck's introduction to Mrs. Smith's delightful circle, a little thing had happened at Podger's Wharf in the neighbourhood of Nine Elms upon the south side of the river.

A gentleman of the name of Peake employed by Messrs. Harman and James, barge and transport masters, to pump and swab out the bilge of the "Queen of Denmark," certified to carry 182 tons of merchandise, and of due cubic capacity for that burthen, discovered himself unable to reach the vessel on account of the intervening mud and the accident of an exceptionally low tide.

At twelve o'clock the new and well-appointed hooter of Messrs. Harman and James's works having sounded, Mr. Peake immediately laid down the mop and hand-pump with which he had been furnished, and proceeded to pass the check door and receive his salary, for it was a Saturday. The day was very sunny and bright—but that is not to my purpose.

Mr. Harman himself approached Mr. Peake and

suggested to him that now the tide was rising he might gratify the firm by remaining at an increased salary for a couple of hours to accomplish his task; but Mr. Peake pointed out with such brevity as the occasion demanded that this would be a gross violation of the rules of his Union, and moved towards the gate.

It was at this moment that Mr. Harman committed the deplorable error which was to lead to such enormous consequences in the body politic: he lost his temper. He was alleged, I know not with how much truth, to have addressed Mr. Peake in terms vividly suggesting social inferiority; but whether this be true or not it is certain that he assured Mr. Peake of the uselessness of seeking further employment at the wharf; nay, he had the brutality to tender to that gentleman a week's salary in lieu of notice, and having done so he retired.

I will not here go into the vexed question of the language used on either side, nor enter into Mr. Harman's somewhat lame excuses that he was provoked by a certain expression of his employee's which cast a most unjust reflection upon his, Mr. Harman's, pride of birth and personal morals. Mr. Harman's hasty action was surely indefensible upon any provocation, and its natural consequence was that the remainder of those who

worked at Podger's Wharf were called out by their Union, while the United Riverside Workers and Sons of Southwark threatened a sympathetic cessation of labour to extend from the eastern side of Hammersmith Bridge to the western edge of the steps at the bottom of Edgar Street in Limehouse.

I need hardly say that under these circumstances the compulsory clauses of the Conciliation Act of 1909 were at once acted upon by the popular and wealthy President of the Board of Trade, and the decision of the courts, the machinery of which in such actions is extraordinarily rapid, was given within three days entirely in favour of the Union; indeed, no other decision could possibly have been arrived at, and public opinion thoroughly justified the coercion very properly applied to the tyrannical master; papers as different as the *Spectator* and the *Winning Post* were at one upon the matter, and their widely separate reading publics heartily agreed.

So far the incident, though it had attained certain dimensions, did not threaten any very grave results. But it so happened that a section of the workers involved, namely, the Paint Removers and Tar and Marine Composition Appliers had taken advantage of the disturbance to demand the abolition of piecework upon all hulks and upon all

vessels in active use between the Garboard Strake and the North Atlantic Winter Loading Line. The courts, in their haste to settle the main issue, had perhaps too lightly overlooked this contention, and the result was some considerable disappointment among the Paint Removers and Tar and Marine Composition Appliers throughout the Port of London. The Union, as it was bound to do by statute, accepted the decision of the court ; unfortunately a gentleman of the name of Fishmonger, in company with his brother-in-law, Henry Bebb (hereinforth and henceforward known as "Another"), both expert Tar Smoothers, felt so strongly upon the matter that they refused to return to work. A warrant was made out for their arrest, and though their Union was somewhat half-hearted in the matter, the P.D.Q. and several other societies desired to fight it, and under the powers afforded by the same statute they lodged an appeal—for, as is now well known, there are certain cases in which a workman cannot be compelled to accept employment even after the Court of Conciliation has delivered its judgment.

The appeal was heard before Justices Hunnybubble, Compton and Welsh. Sir John Compton was averse to create a precedent of such lamentable consequence ; the Act was new, it was, so to speak, upon its trial, and though he would have been the

first to admit that he was there not to make the law but to administer it, he could not but recognise the function of an English judge in the commonwealth, and he was for finding some issue by which Mr. Fishmonger and Mr. Bebb might escape the too drastic consequences of a somewhat hastily drafted measure.

We are not a logical people: we refuse to be bound by the formal syllogisms so popular with the lower races of Europe and especially among the dying Latin nations. There is no doubt that Mr. Justice Compton reflected, in the attitude he adopted, the permanent common sense of the nation. Unfortunately, Mr. Justice Hunnybubble, in spite of the sterling Saxon name he bore, was too much of the lawyer and the pedant to concur. In his long and disastrous decision he introduced a hundred empty abstractions and metaphysical whimsies: that "contract was mutual," for instance, or that "the obligation was binding upon either party." He even descended to talking of "equality" declared the law as much the defender of the rich man as of the poor, and would not admit, in theory, that contrast between Employer and Employed, which is so glaring in practice to every eye. He insisted that if the master was constrained to take a workman back, so was that workman bound to return; he so strained the petty

details of the Act itself as to interpret the words "all parties" in clause IV. to include the employees as well as the employers, and applied the phrase "shall abide by the award under pain, &c.," to hungry artisan as severely as to paunchy capitalist.

In spite of Sir John Compton's dissent, Mr. Justice Hunnybubble took with him his colleague, Welch. The decision of the lower court was therefore upheld, and Mr. Fishmonger and Mr. Bebb, who had found better paid employment in the Halls during the Long Vacation, and who refused to re-enter the yard, were, to the shame of our institutions, cast into Holloway Jail as first class misdemeanants. They were deprived of the use of tobacco and the daily newspapers; and even their cuisine was regulated by official order.

While the case was still *sub judice* the respect invariably shown to the courts forbade any open comment, but when, some ten days after Mr. Clutterbuck's interview with the executive of Mickleton, the deplorable miscarriage of justice had actually taken place, and when the populace had been afforded the spectacle of these two unfortunate men driven in a common cab to their dungeon, the storm burst.

The general emotion did not at first find its way into the public Press: the proprietors of our daily and weekly journals have too strong a regard for

the Bench to permit themselves any immediate criticism of a judicial decision, and the relations into which they are nightly brought with our judges as host or guest in many a hospitable house, adds to their natural reserve; but in spite of this absence of printed comment, the matter became first the chief, and at least the only subject of talk among the artisans of the metropolis, from them it spread, as all such movements must, to the unskilled labourers, and from these to the general population of London. Within a fortnight the police were aware of the extraordinary extent of the ferment, and the Home Secretary went so far as to curtail a pleasant visit at the country seat of the Baron de Czernwitz, in order to hurry up to town and consult with his brother-in-law, the Lord Chief Justice, and his wife's uncle, the Chief Commissioner. His decision was to do nothing: but meanwhile two public meetings had been held, one in Moore's Circus, another an open-air one, on Peckham Rye, and feeling had risen so high that two newspapers actually admitted short reports of the proceedings at each of these gatherings.

Early in November, while matters were in this very critical state, the sitting member for Mickleton whose financial entanglement could no longer be concealed, fled to Ostend and was rash enough to take his life in the front room of the Villa des

Charmettes, thereby leaving a vacancy in the representation of his borough.

Mr. Clutterbuck's easy prospect of nursing Mickleton, of carefully and continuously supporting its worthier activities, and of extending a judicious hospitality to its many inhabitants, was suddenly shattered: he must prepare for instant action. It was with a mixture of fixed concern and unpleasant excitement that, under the direction of Charlie Fitzgerald, his plans were made.

The writ, it was understood, would be issued on the following Wednesday week, and the polling would take place upon Saturday, November 19; there was little time to lose. The dates and places of the principal meetings were rapidly arranged, the printers among whom work was to be distributed were carefully noted, the excellent organisation of the constituency had prepared him a numbered list of the electors who would expect a personal visit, and he received one morning by post the manifesto which had been drawn up at headquarters for him to sign.

Mr. Clutterbuck had signed this in his business-like way and had left it for his secretary to post.

That gentleman came in from his usual morning spin in the green Darracq—the Napier he had slightly damaged some days before in attempting a group of oxen on Merstham hill. As he slowly

mastered the few lines he began to shake his head solemnly and at last laid the document down, saying :

"It won't do as it is."

"You don't want me to add to it myself, Mr. Fitzgerald ?" said Mr. Clutterbuck with an anxious look.

"N—no," said Fitzgerald, running his finger down the page. . . . "My point is . . . there's something you got to add."

He read it again more closely, knitting his brows.

It was a straightforward bit of democratic pleading and clear, popular statement. It emphasised the importance to Great Britain of raising the price of Consols up to a standard level of seventy-five, of maintaining and if possible increasing the gold reserve so that the Bank rate should not rise above six per cent. for more than three months at one time ; it declared strongly for the principle of female courts of justice, and supported the policy of the Government in its recent subsidies to the Grimsby fishing industry, the White Star Line the Small Holders Capitalisation Association, the new "Eastern Counties Railway," and Lord Painton's Association for the Construction and Repair of English Canals.

Upon lesser matters it turned to criticise the woe-

ful parsimony of the late administration, and contrasted the provision made for the fleet in the last National Budget with the Naval Estimates of 1908.

The document ended with a paragraph upon the Offences Disfranchisement Bill, which Charlie Fitzgerald read with close attention. It was as follows:

"*In my opinion those who have borne themselves so ill as to merit condemnation by one of our English justices of the peace, whether to fine or imprisonment, or both, are certainly worthy of some measure of loss of the powers of the fulness of complete and unrestricted citizenship; but I shall reserve my judgment upon the present Government's decision to withdraw the franchise for five years, or in some cases in perpetuity, from those who have done no more than to excite such grave suspicion as must attach to those who have been arrested by the police or have been present as defendants in a county court.*"

Fitzgerald read this sentence three times over, and sighed. "Too many 'ofs'," he murmured, "too many words! . . . "Did you *notice* that last paragraph?" he added without looking up at his employer.

"I really can't say, Mr. Fitzgerald," answered that gentleman moving about somewhat uneasily. "I can't tell you, quoted offhand like that. What's it about?"

"Well, it *seems* to be about the Offences Disfranchisement Bill, but God only knows who drafted it."

"Who—what?" said Mr. Clutterbuck still more uneasily, coming and looking over his shoulder.

"Who wrote it out," said Fitzgerald, "who designed the beastly thing?"

"Really, Mr. Fitzgerald, really," said Mr. Clutterbuck. He had not himself written the fatal words, but he had carried on a little correspondence of his own about them, and he did not like the work to be treated so sharply, though his respect for Charlie Fitzgerald was still strong.

"It's got to go," said Fitzgerald decisively.

"Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald!" said Mr. Clutterbuck in some alarm, "we can't do without an allusion to the Offences Bill! Really, Mr. Fitzgerald, you know it's the most important reform, well, of our time so to speak. Why," said he, remembering sundry quotations from his reading: "this country is the pioneer; Italy's only talked of the thing; Germany's backward. There's only Nebraska abreast of us. And think of the effect!"

"Look here," said Charlie Fitzgerald a little impatiently, "*that* paragraph has got to go. If you want to say anything about the Offences Disfranchisement Bill you had better put in four lines

saying that wild horses won't make you vote for it in any shape or form. But I doubt whether those old jossers in Mickleton would pass that. Just say nothing about it, and a day or two before the poll enlarge your spirit on the platform and damn it up hill and down dale."

Mr. Clutterbuck felt like a man who had just lost his dog, but he held his tongue, and only thought mournfully of the letters that might come to him next day.

"And now," said Charlie Fitzgerald as he drew a red chalk thoughtfully through the offending paragraph, "I'm going off this evening, and when I come back I shall tell you what I *think* ought to be added at the end of the manifesto—I shall know then."

He got up quite suddenly. "I won't be late," he added. "I'll be back before midnight, and I'll tell you."

Mr. Clutterbuck and he looked at each other without speaking for a moment, and for once there was a slight disturbance in the merchant's mind as he looked through the window and saw his secretary calmly giving orders to the gardener and to the mechanician, and a moment later stepping into the newly-bought F.I.A.T. with a gesture of proprietorship that was perhaps a trifle exaggerated.

But this unworthy mood disturbed for but a

moment the Clutterbuckian poise, and certainly his young friend's achievement, when he returned to tell of it, would have dispelled for ever any such ill-omened emotion.

* * * * *

The business which Mr. Fitzgerald had before him that evening was one so familiar to all those acquainted with the apparatus of self-government, that it is perhaps redundant in me to chronicle it. Nevertheless it was of such importance in the events that follow, that I must briefly relate it.

He drove to the station and sent the car back (its reappearance was a first solace to the master of the house); he took, out of the petty cash, a first return for Victoria, hailed a cab as he left the station (noting the expense with a regularity rare in a man of high birth and Irish nationality), drove to his Club, dined handsomely, again put down this incidental item in round figures, hailed yet another cab, and told the driver vaguely to drive to Mickleton.

The driver, a North countryman of sturdy temper, insisted upon knowing an exact address, but upon receiving a reply which savoured too much of carelessness about The Future Life, he whipped up his horse and drove northward as he was bid, taking, as is the invariable custom of hackney coachmen, the largest and the widest artery of the place, a street known for some centuries as the London Road,

called during the eighties and nineties The Boulevard, but since the feat of arms of General Baden-Powell, characteristically and finally christened Mafeking Avenue.

In this fine thoroughfare were to be discovered not a few licensed premises. Charlie Fitzgerald chose the most sumptuous of these and the best lit stopped the cab and went in. He was about to explore the public opinion of Mickleton.

He came out in a quarter of an hour, drove on to another public-house, visited it for a few minutes only, called at another and another, and so until he had fairly sampled the constituents in perhaps a dozen of those general rendezvous where the political temper of a great people may best be determined. The result of his investigation was much what he had expected, though it was more precise, and in one matter much more emphatic, than he would have premised before he began his inquiry.

The populace were, as he had expected, indifferent to, and for the greater part ignorant of, the death of their respected member. Those of them who were acquainted with his demise found it difficult to keep an audience, and the few who had attempted to retail it as an entertaining item of news, were met by the coarsest of opposition, save in the case of one man, who ascribed it with conviction to

murder at the hands of the police, pointing out to his companion at "The Naked Man" how many cases of such mysterious deaths had recently occurred on the Opposition side of the House, and drawing from his own rich experience of the constabulary many dark examples of their mysterious power.

But while the death of the late baronet was found to have produced so little impression, one topic struck Fitzgerald's ears upon every side, and this, I need hardly say, was the case of Rex v. Fishmonger and Another.

The full legal terminology was unfamiliar to these plain working men, and they alluded to it commonly as "the Nine Elms business," or the "Podger's Lay" to which the more familiar would add the term, "the Holloway job." But unvarnished and even inaccurate as were their expressions, it was clear that they were deeply moved. Save here and there in the saloon bars, where the local gentry would meet in rarer numbers, and where Fitzgerald during this tour had little concern, nothing else was talked of: most significant of all, as he rightly judged, was the ardent sympathy of the potboys, the barmaids, and the very publicans themselves, who, for all their substantial position as employers of labour, could not conceal their ardent agreement with their customers.

A foreigner unacquainted with the national temper, and hearing the popular judgments passed upon Mr. Justice Hunnybubble, might have imagined that exalted personage's life to be in danger, and in more than one instance Charlie Fitzgerald was annoyed to have a glass smashed under his nose in the heat of the denunciations, or to find some huge and purple visage, one with which he was totally unacquainted, angrily challenging him to agree with the general verdict or to take Toko. With true diplomacy Fitzgerald joined heartily in the universal topic and opinion, but his clothes and accent laid him open to a just suspicion, and he was glad when his round of visits was over and his mind thoroughly informed.

It is not an easy thing to conduct such a piece of research after dinner in a dozen public-houses large and small, and to retain one's clarity of vision and one's acuteness of judgment. But Fitzgerald, by the simple manœuvre of ordering the whiskey and the water separately, and of ultimately standing the former to a chance acquaintance in each place, accomplished his mission with complete success. As he took the last train at Victoria, after discharging the cabman with an ample reward (which he again noted in round figures), he had the campaign well in hand.

That night, late as it was, he found Mr. Clutter-

buck waiting for him, and, what is more, Mrs. Clutterbuck as well. He manfully stood out one hour of earnest defence against her continued presence, and when, not without a promise of vengeance in her eye she had determined to retreat, he tackled Mr. Clutterbuck at once, and told him that the constituency was his upon one condition.

Mr. Clutterbuck, who seriously feared that the condition would involve yet another generous recognition of The Sons of Endeavour, was relieved beyond measure to hear that no more was required of him than a strong and simple declaration such as behoved a Democrat upon a plain matter of public policy.

"You got to speak heart and soul for Fishmonger —and for the Other also, I suppose," said Charlie Fitzgerald. "If you think you dare do it, go for Hunnybubble, and do as little as you can of anything else. That's the tip," said Fitzgerald, bringing his hands together with a hearty clap like a pistol shot, and mentally calculating his total expenses of the evening, with ten shillings added for a margin.

It was all Greek to Mr. Clutterbuck, but he understood it was politics. To a man of his frankness and probity political work was clear, and—so that it were political work and contained no hint of corruption—he was ready for the fray.

Of the elements of the matter he could only remember vaguely the word Fishmonger tucked away in small type in the legal columns of the *Times*, while for Mr. Justice Hunnybubble he had never felt any feeling more precise than the deference due to a man who was gratefully remembered by the social class to which Mr. Clutterbuck belonged as "Hanging Jim."

The hour was too late for him to follow further argument. It was not till next morning that his strategy was laid down for him by his invaluable secretary.

The manifesto was brought out again, the last objectionable paragraph was cut out, and in its place Charlie Fitzgerald added these ringing words:

"MUCH MORE THAN ANY PASSING QUESTION OF POLITICS I SHALL CHALLENGE, IF YOU RETURN ME AS YOUR MEMBER, THE HIDEOUS INJUSTICE AND TYRANNY WHICH HAS CONDEMNED TWO BRITISH WORKMEN TO LANGUISH IN JAIL FOR EXERCISING THE COMMON RIGHTS OF EVERY FREE MAN. AND I SHALL LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED TO SECURE THE REVERSAL OF THAT INIQUITOUS JUDGMENT."

"Now," said Charlie Fitzgerald pleasantly, when he had drafted this bugle call, "we won't send that back to your agents, will we?" He accompanied

this unexpected remark with a sunny smile, and Mr. Clutterbuck looked at him blankly.

"No, no," said Charlie Fitzgerald humorously, "we'll note who the printers are, shall we?" He looked at the small type at the bottom of the sheet and saw "The Alexandra Printing Works."

"I'm greatly relieved," he said, "they're Opposition: they can't be got at by our people." Then he wrote on a slip of paper: "20,000 as corrected. Please note caps in last paragraph. No need for revise. Deliver to address given. Hoardings as order. Immediate." He scribbled Mr. Clutterbuck's initials as it was his secretarial duty to do. He folded up the proof and the note, addressed the cover, and before Mr. Clutterbuck fully seized what had happened, Fitzgerald had himself taken it down to the pillar-box at the lodge and was back, cheerfully contented.

"I'm sure you know best, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Clutterbuck, though he was not yet quite happy.

For answer Mr. Fitzgerald pulled out of his pocket an evening paper, in which was the account of a police charge in Mickleton itself, which had broken up a monster meeting in favour of the condemned men.

Mr. Clutterbuck read the account carefully, and interlarded his reading with repeated exclamations

of wonder addressed apparently to the reporter of the scene.

He was next turning to read the opinions of the paper itself upon the transaction, and would in a moment have discovered its disapproval of his constituency's violence, when Fitzgerald asked for the sheet to be given back to him, and Mr. Clutterbuck at once complied. His mind was clear. The thing was in capitals, and would evidently be the point of the election. He must get it up.

CHAPTER VII

MR. CLUTTERBUCK was right, and Charlie Fitzgerald had judged wisely.

The first meeting of the campaign was to be held in quite a little hall belonging to the local ethical society. No interest had yet been taken in the election, the greater part of the constituency had perhaps but just heard of it—yet the whole evening turned upon Fishmonger and The Other.

Mr. Clutterbuck's fervid declaration was not enough : one man after another at the back of the hall must take the opportunity, while congratulating the candidate upon his attitude, to make a considerable harangue upon the awful pass to which English freedom had come. Leaflets, printed by the Relief Committee, were in the hands of more than half the audience ; and what was more interesting was to see how, the moment the meeting was over, those who had asked questions distributed themselves, as though according to orders, into the various quarters of the borough, visiting the public

houses and spreading the news of their candidate's declarations.

This was upon a Wednesday. On the Friday, for which the second meeting had been announced, a much larger hall, the Cleethorpe Foundation Schools, was absolutely full before a quarter past seven, though the speeches were not to begin until eight.

The audience filled the interval with songs concerning political and economic liberty, and more than one ribald catch in contempt of the Fishmonger judgment. The appearance of the platform did not silence them. They sang with a vengeance as they awaited their candidate, and the stout and elderly chairman, Mr. Alderman Thorpe, continually pulled out his watch in his nervousness, noted that the crowd of faces before him were of quite a different sort from those repeated faces which perpetually appeared at the National meetings. The tone of their cries was more violent than the Executive were accustomed to, and the spirit of the hall quite novel.

Mr. Clutterbuck at last appeared. It was unfortunate that he should be ten minutes late, and the accident provoked not a few shouted queries, but his appearance as he stalked on to the platform with Charlie Fitzgerald at his heels, called forth an indescribable volume of cheering, which lasted during

the whole of the introducer's speech, and threatened to overlap into that of the candidate himself.

Mr. Clutterbuck was not an impromptu speaker; it was his custom to learn by heart the remarks it was his duty to deliver, nor was he superior to obtaining a general draft or even a more detailed summary of those remarks from the Democratic Speech Agency upon Holborn Viaduct. That evening, however, his heart spoke for him, and he could not forbear repeating some dozen times, when silence was restored, "Upon my word, gentlemen, I am highly flattered—I am highly flattered, I am very highly flattered, indeed!"

He cleared his throat and began the first set speech of the campaign. He knew it by heart; it was therefore in a clear if somewhat high pitched voice that he delivered the opening phrase "the effect of free trade in the past upon"—he was interrupted by another wild burst of cheering and loud applause from the vast audience, who imagined him to refer to the incarcerated Fishmonger and whose thousand hearts were beating as one.

It was so throughout the carefully worded address. His allusion to the taxation of rice produced the chorus of a popular song in favour of the men languishing in Holloway, and his passing remarks upon Consols "which, as a City man he assured them were a matter to him of the very gravest con-

cern," led to repeated cries of "Drown old Harman!" and enthusiastic hurrahs for their candidate's championship of the doomed men.

When Mr. Clutterbuck sat down, in some confusion but in great happiness, and when the customary vote of thanks had been given, a genial publican in the body of the hall who had never attended a public meeting save to protest against the unhappy Licensing Bill of 1908, rose most unexpectedly to support the resolution. In a voice full of nutriment and good humour, he assured the candidate, amid repeated confirmations from all around, that in spite of his attitude upon temperance —and no one saw more of the evils of *in*temperance than the licensed victualler—in spite of that, Mr. Clutterbuck's manly attitude on the case of Rex *v.* Fishmonger and Another would secure him the support of the trade.

A clergyman, who had had the temerity to rise with the intention of congratulatimg the candidate, was imagined from his pale face and refined voice to be an opponent : he was angrily silenced, and the meeting dispersed with loud cheers for his present Majesty, for the armed servants of the Crown whether military or naval, and—need it be told ?—for Fishmonger over all.

It was evidently an election to be taken on the fly and to be run before the machine slowed down.

The common National literature sent out from the head offices in Peter Street was soon absorbed. Charlie Fitzgerald implored them for matter upon Fishmonger, but the official press refused. He could not brave the Act nor exceed the statutory limit of expense, but Mr. Clutterbuck was delighted to find that the Fishmonger Relief Committee—to which his wife, his brother-in-law, and even his coachman very largely subscribed—would furnish him with endless tracts and posters. The walls were covered by this independent ally, and the expenditure upon its part of over four thousand pounds associated Mr. Clutterbuck's name with the relief of the poor prisoners in letters six, ten and fifteen feet high and in the most astounding colours.

There were pictures also: pictures by the ton. Pictures of Mr. Clutterbuck striking the fetters from Fishmonger's wrists; pictures of Fishmonger in convict garb sleeping his troubled sleep upon a pallet of straw while a vision of the valiant Clutterbuck floated above him in a happy cloud: this was called "The Dream of Hope." Pictures of Fishmonger on the treadmill pitied by an indignant Britannia and a Clutterbuck springing to his aid, inflamed the popular zeal, and further pictures of a black Demon cowering before an avenging Clutterbuck in full armour afforded a parable of immense effect.

And then there were speeches! Every day saw its meeting, and at the end of the first week its second or its third meeting within the twenty-four hours. Mr. Clutterbuck, by whose side Mrs. Clutterbuck often sat in those wild and happy moments of popular fervour, was permitted no great length by his secretary, and a band of good fellows who were determined to achieve the liberties of England, took care that questions other than those provided them by the secretary or the committee, should not be asked with impunity. It was even, as the unhappy example of the clergyman had shown, unwise to express adhesion to Mr. Clutterbuck's candidature, unless this were done in so unmistakable a manner that there should be no room for popular hostility.

So ended the first week of the struggle; nor had Mr. Clutterbuck showed a single fault save, in his confusion, an occasional lack of punctuality, which was certainly resented and noted more than he knew. His throat was supple, his delivery clear, but he was a little doubtful whether his enunciation was sufficiently vigorous to fill a large hall.

Sunday, I am glad to say, in spite of the woeful inroads Socialism has recently made, was observed as a day of rest by either side; and Mr. Clutterbuck took the opportunity of the holy season to summon to The Plâs, on Charlie Fitzgerald's advice

and at an enormous expense, a Voice Producer, who, while complaining of the shortness of the time allowed him, guaranteed his client a considerable extension of vocal power if his rules were strictly observed.

He it was who for three hours upon that holy day elicited from Mr. Clutterbuck at least one hundred times, a loud and increasing roar during which he insisted that the head should be thrown back, the throat widely opened and the mouth stretched to its fullest extent. He it was who, insisted upon the regular use of the Hornsby lozenge, though Mr. Clutterbuck had been persuaded by a friend to make secret use of the Glarges type of emollient bonbon. He it was who taking Mr. Clutterbuck after tea by the shoulders, pressed them back until, at the expense of exquisite suffering to that elderly gentleman, he had caused them to lock behind him. He it was who then compelled the merchant to fill his chest to its fullest extent, to retain his breath to the utmost of his capacity, and to emit, when he could hold it no longer, the syllables

MAH-MUH-MOH-MAY-MYE-MEE-MO-MAH

in the ascending notes of the octave; and he it was who almost rendered the master of the house ridiculous by compelling him to run three or four

times round the building and never to cease a loud singsong during his breathless course.

Mr. Clutterbuck could not but feel that the professional adviser had well earned the twenty guineas with which he was rewarded; and if upon rising the next morning he found himself somewhat strained and hoarse, he readily accepted Fitzgerald's assurance that his voice would return all the more strongly in the course of the day.

That Monday morning, the Monday preceding the poll, the first of the open-air meetings was held in front of the Town Hall, and quite 4,000 people from every part of London, among whom were a number of the local electors themselves, must have listened to the short declaration in which Mr. Clutterbuck, now considerably fatigued, insisted, for the twenty-seventh time, in terms with which they were now all too familiar, and in a voice increasingly raucous, upon the iniquity of the judgment he stood there to reverse, and upon the necessity of returning him to Westminster in order to effect the necessary change in the law; indeed it cannot be denied that, as the election proceeded and the excitement grew, Mr. Clutterbuck himself came greatly to exaggerate the power of a private member in directing the course of British legislation. The lengthy procedure of the House of Commons of which he had but a

hazy conception, dwindled in his imagination, and as for the House of Lords, he forgot it altogether.

Upon the Tuesday a football match upon Mickleton Common naturally suspended the vanity of speechmaking, and the day was given over to that hard spadework by the canvassers upon which every election finally depends. The canvassing was the more successful and the less arduous from the fact that the heads of families who were cheering upon the Common the fortunes of the Mickleton Rousers, left the ladies at home to pledge the votes of the household, which they did with a complete freedom to the emissaries of either candidate.

Mr. Clutterbuck, his wife, Fitzgerald, and Mr. Maple, the agent, went the round all day till the candidate himself was fit to drop. At one place they smiled and bowed at a little group of lads who replied with glares, at another they steadily worked half a street, only to find at last that it was just outside the constituency. At a third, a seedy man, a most undoubted voter, who had been present at every meeting approached Mr. Clutterbuck and spoke a word in his ear.

Mr. Clutterbuck good-naturedly proffered half a sovereign ; the coin had barely changed hands when the agent—who had caught the gesture in the nick of time—pounced on the needy citizen

and wrenched his fingers open by main force. The struggle was brief, and Mr. Maple—a man of stature and consequence—triumphantly returned the coin to the candidate.

Whether from the wrestling or some other emotion he was trembling as he returned it.

"Oh! Mr. Clutterbuck—Oh! It would have cost you your seat!" he puffed out.

Mr. Clutterbuck was grateful indeed, but he heard for hours the echo of the angry borrower's blasphemy and his repeated vow to vote for that fallen angel whom an older theology has regarded as the Enemy of Mankind before he would vote National again.

So Tuesday ended—and here my duty compels me to introduce the repugnant subject of the Opposition candidate, lest the reader should forget in the fever of enthusiasm which I have described, the very presence of a man who dared to set himself against the expressed opinion of The People.

Lord Henfield was his name. His hairs, which were of the palest yellow and few in number for a man of but thirty years, were parted down the middle with an extraordinary accuracy which was no more disturbed when he appeared in the early morning after rising from repose than when in the last hours of the night he would withdraw from the

critical and angry audiences which he too often had to encounter.

His face was not clean-shaven: contrariwise, he wore long and drooping moustaches of the same character and complexion as his hair, and forming a singular contrast with that virile grey crescent upon Mr. Clutterbuck's upper lip, of which the reader has so often heard.

His eyes were of a very watery blue; he lisped a little, and such decision as he may have possessed was only to be discovered in his apparently complete indifference to the judgment of men poorer than himself.

The deference due to his rank and wealth forbade any assault upon his person; all other forms of opposition he met with a slight and rather mournful smile, and with the regret that there should be any differences between himself and those whom he hoped would soon prove to be his constituents.

The weakness of his position was not, it may be admitted, entirely due to his personality nor even to the wild popularity which the cause of Fishmonger and Another had recently acquired. Indeed he was as ardent a champion of the incarcerated Fishmonger as was Mr. Clutterbuck himself, and differed from his opponent only in modifying his language where it might have shocked the English sense of the respect which we all owe to the Bench.

His principal ally in a struggle which seemed to disturb him so little was his wife. Lady Henfield, a woman of the most captivating vitality, called at every house in the constituency, smiled, flattered, and joked into friendship the hearts of all the women, and fearlessly bestowed upon either sex indifferently the marks of a warm appreciation which, from such a woman, are never thrown away. Many a household could tell, long before the contest was engaged, of deeds of kindness which her genuine sympathy with the populace forbade her to noise abroad, and her known influence upon the Board of Pleeson's Charity, a social work of immense importance in the neighbourhood, lent her a high and most legitimate influence in all that she did in Mickleton. She had had the sense to take a house for her husband in the locality, and though they but rarely slept in this distant quarter of the metropolis, the excellent way in which it was served and furnished naturally impressed her neighbours of every degree.

All this counteracted, to no slight extent, Lord Henfield's insufficient performances upon the platform, and no one acquainted with electoral campaigning will deny that the enthusiasm or disapproval of popular audiences counts little as compared with the domestic effect of private visits and of good deeds coming from the heart. To all this was

added on the Wednesday, a false step on the part of Mr. Clutterbuck, which for the first time, and that so near the poll, was a serious setback to the tide in his favour. A gentleman of considerable means, a printer and dyer of the name of Stephens, who had frequently appeared upon Mr. Clutterbuck's platform and had seemed, even to the keen eye of Charlie Fitzgerald, to be an inoffensive plutocrat, insisted upon receiving the candidate and his wife as his guests at Bongers End during the last days of the struggle.

"It will save your husband," he said to Mrs. Clutterbuck, "those long night journeys to Croydon which a man at his age cannot afford to despise, and will give Mrs. Stephens and myself and my two sons and my daughter Clara and Miss Curle the very greatest pride and pleasure."

This apparently innocuous proposal, which Mrs. Clutterbuck eagerly accepted for her husband, was a threefold error. A long-standing rivalry, or rather enmity, existed between their new host and a Mr. Clay, whose engineering works were perhaps the most important industry in Mickleton, and who as a Tory Home Ruler of some years' standing, was now naturally the head of the National Party since the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin and the framing of the new tariff had called that party into existence. He bitterly resented the honour shown

to his rival, and it needed all the tact of Fitzgerald to prevent his influence being thrown into the wrong scale. But that tact was well exercised. Fitzgerald called upon Mr. Clay late at night, described Mr. Clutterbuck's intense desire to have been the guest of Mr. Clay, his hesitation to invite himself, the brutal forwardness of his rival, while the whole story was cemented by a description of blood relationship between Mrs. Clutterbuck and Mrs. Stephens, which, in later days, Fitzgerald himself did not hesitate to deny.

To lead the close of the campaign from Mr. Stephen's mansion at Bongers End was still more dangerous, from the fact that a quarrel had arisen between that gentleman and one of his workmen, whom indeed he had almost dismissed : had the tragedy actually occurred, the situation would have been not very different from the famous cause of the strike at Podger's Wharf, and the parallel was often drawn between the one case and the other in the humbler homes of Mickleton. Finally, Mr. Clutterbuck had not calculated, when he yielded to the warm pressure of his host, that his famous declaration upon total abstinence would there be taken in its literal sense. The principles of the National Party—which had now for two years advocated voluntary abstinence as an alternative to predatory legislation against the trade—for-

bade Mr. Clutterbuck to touch wine or spirits when he was actually present in the constituency, and he knew very well that if he were returned to the House of Commons it would be necessary for him to take his meals in the new rooms set apart for those who not only denied themselves the use of such beverages, but had the stalwart manhood to forego so much as the sight of others who were causing Israel to sin. But he would never have been able to support the fatigues of those wild days had he not carried in his pocket a flask of B.Q. cognac, and had he not been able from time to time to escape from a midday meal to his club, or better still, to some restaurant where he was unknown. He had, further, on returning to Surrey every night, freely restored his energies by vigorous draughts of port, a wine to which he had grown accustomed and whose use he could ill spare.

It was, therefore, no small handicap to find continual allusion made under Mr. Stephens's roof to his valiant and thorough-going principles, nor did it help the situation to see round him every member of the household, including Mrs. Clutterbuck and his secretary, served with the most generous vintages, while he was compelled to choose milk (which he had never yet been able to digest), water, against which he had been often warned, or those aerated substitutes which his

doctor had repeatedly insisted to be, in his particular case, no better than windy poisons.

His vigour declined; his voice grew worse and worse; he hesitated in the midst of his speeches; he contradicted himself more than once. The first serious opposition, upon the Wednesday night, threw him into a fever of anxiety from which he had not recovered the next day. He appeared unpunctually before an impatient audience and actually forgot to appear at all at a smaller meeting later in the evening: a piece of folly that cost him fifty votes.

Meanwhile the renewed energies of his opponents rendered his position less and less enviable as the day of the poll approached, although the Opposition suffered in this election, as in every other, from the very grave drawback that it had no fixed name.

Since 1910 a heterogeneous body, in which the old theoretical Free-Traders, of whose exalted principle and vivid intellectual power the *Spectator* was the voice, the wide sporting interests whose principal organ was the *Winning Post*, the new Socialist group and the remnants of Unionist and Orange following had coalesced; and though no leader of the first rank appeared, an able secretary, Mr. Ephraim, managed to control the old party chest, but upon a name they could not agree, and in almost every separate by-election their candidate appeared under

a different label. Their hold upon the electorate depended upon a promise of future reforms which it would take many years to carry out and in which the populace but half believed, coupled with somewhat academic criticism upon the mistakes of the party in office. But this last weapon, the most powerful weapon of any opposition, they could not use with effect against the administration of a young and popular Prime Minister, of little more than forty years of age, whose enormous wealth and well-known delicacy of lung alike endeared him to the reasonable heart of the people.

Moreover, the Opposition lacked an effective party cry: for the editor of the *Spectator's* admirable epigram, "No fleet, no meat," had offended the powerful vegetarian group, and Mr. Tylee's quatrain in the *Banner of Israel* was above the heads of the vulgar.

Such was the strength and the weakness of either side when upon Friday, the day before the poll, the last meetings were held, the last placards posted, and the affairs of the opposing parties finally put in order.

To Mr. Clutterbuck's extreme surprise—for the details of our political life were still new to him—a bag of sovereigns was distributed among the stout hearts who had worked so hard in the Cause, and Mr. Stephens, humorously calling himself for

the occasion "the Bogey Man"—a pseudonym received with grateful laughter—saw that the hundred good fellows who had toiled from door to door should receive refreshment as well as honest wage. It was distributed in the garage attached to his magnificent villa, and the day wound up finding all, with the exception of the candidate himself, well satisfied.

There was no doubt that Mr. Clutterbuck was pitiably overwrought. Had he dared he would have broken through the convention of so many arduous days and have drunk freely from some revivifying spring. But his conscience and his common sense alike forbade him.

He looked forward in despair to the night as his only chance of solace and relief, and prayed for such repose as might fit him to meet the terrible strain of the morrow; but that night Mr. Clutterbuck, for all his exhaustion, slept ill.

He rose frequently in the small hours to swallow one of the Hornsby lozenges or, when these palled upon him, one of the Glarges. At times he gargled, and at others, filling his chest to the fullest extent and retaining his breath to the utmost of his capacity, he murmured the syllables which he had been assured would strengthen the vocal chords. He could not, in a stranger's house and at such an hour, permit himself the loud roar which the Voice

Producer had insisted upon: it would have been discourteous and, what was worse, it might have impaired his now assured reputation for consistency and sober judgment. It was doubtless, however, owing to this unfortunate but necessary omission that he owed, next day, his complete inability to speak above a whisper.

He rose tired out at seven, dressed wearily, and came down upon that fatal day, November 19, 1911. He saw with increased depression that it was raining. He was, I am sorry to say, so distressed during the heartfelt and simple family prayers of the household as to overset the chair at which he knelt; and at breakfast his nervousness was so intense as to be positively painful to his kind host and hostess, who pressed upon him with assiduous hospitality, kidneys, eggs, bacon, haddock seethed in milk, sausages, cold pheasant, Virginia peach-fed ham, and kedgeree. He was indifferent to all these things.

During the few moments after breakfast which our great English merchants devote to glancing at the daily Press, he could not bring himself to look at the papers which lay upon the table. He so dreaded the insults of the one, he dreaded so much more in another the condensed reports of what he might have said, that he found himself longing, in a sort of dazed way, for some news sheet in which the

world might be presented to him empty of his own famous name. As it was, I repeat, he dared not open one of them.

Luckily for him his cheery host did not leave him long in this misery. He found him standing listless in the hall, slapped him on the back and said in a loud and hearty voice :

"You've got to come with me! The motor's ready and the Missus'll be coming down at once." Then he whispered as the suggestion required : "Brandy ? All's Mum!"

Mr. Clutterbuck refused it, and in a few moments his host had returned with a decanter of the inspiring beverage. Mr. Clutterbuck gulped a great mouthful fearfully, choked, and suffered, but he was grateful, and the more grateful for the rapidity with which Mr. Stephens suddenly rapt the dangerous friend away.

They went out together to the car. Within a quarter of an hour his hostess and Mrs. Clutterbuck had joined them. There was a little byplay as to who should sit in the front seats—a byplay in which Mr. Clutterbuck himself was too dispirited to join—but it was soon decided by the ladies themselves that the hero of the occasion should appear next to the driver, nor did the physical danger to which such a position exposed him enter the minds of these loyal friends.

They proceeded upon the round of the constituency. The streets were empty and the rain continued to fall. At the corner of Mafeking Avenue and Paradise Row, a group of young people upon their way to school cheered loudly upon seeing the National colours, while with childish thoughtlessness some of their number threw petty missiles after the retreating car. As they passed down the smaller streets they were gratified to see Mr. Clutterbuck's portrait, reposing upon a British lion of formidable aspect and draped as to the hinder quarters in a Union Jack, prominent in the windows even of the public-houses.

At the police station Mr. Clutterbuck felt his first movement of emotion at the sight of a policeman who was coming in mackintoshes out of the door, and who saluted with promptitude and respect.

The first polling booth to which they came contained none but the officials, but it was Mr. Clutterbuck's duty to enter, to look cheerful and to shake them by the hand.

"Nothing doing here?" he wheezed with an uneasy smile.

"There've been a few," said the chief with an indifference that did not betray his own politics. "They're not coming very fast. The weather's against 'em."

As he said this, a very short man with a sly, rapid

glance and a jerky manner, darted in, carefully huddled himself round his voting paper, dropped it into the ballot box, darted a look of violent animosity at Mr. Clutterbuck, and was out again in a flash.

He was followed by a publican who shook hands heartily with the candidate, said merrily, "Well, which way 'm I going to vote, I wonder?" and disappeared into the hutch puffing and blowing, came out again, shook hands again, renewed his witticism in a somewhat different form: "Well, which way did I vote, I wonder?"—and waddled out.

Mr. Clutterbuck could bear no more. He climbed again into the motor-car after nodding as genially as he could to the officials at the table, and was asked by his host where he should go next.

He suggested Kipling Crescent.

The school in Kipling Crescent, by one of those contrasts which are symbolic of our enduring sense of equality, though standing in the chief residential street of Mickleton, was sure to receive the largest artisan vote, for it was behind the Crescent that the densest and poorest population of the borough lay. Here there was more animation. A steady if thin stream of workmen came in to record their votes. Few of them expressed any strong interest in the presence of their candidate; one or two touched their caps to the man who was to restore

to them the rights of human beings ; others smiled somewhat foolishly as they passed him : the greater part did not recognise him at all. One man, to whom manual labour had never appealed, and whose pathetic, intelligent eyes betrayed a world of suffering and of want, approached him and murmured a few words. Mr. Clutterbuck caught them indifferently, but they were quite enough. He remembered the fatal half sovereign, and he leapt for the car.

So the morning passed in visiting one booth after another. The rain ceased ; there was a trifle more life round certain booths ; the coming and going of vehicles bearing the colours of either candidate was continuous. These, as they passed each other, would sometimes indulge in playful sarcasm. Now and then an honest fight arose, but no serious injuries were received, and it was not until the afternoon that the streets began to fill.

Thence onward the scene changed. Many who had come from other parts of London were now free to satisfy their curiosity ; the relaxation from labour and the lengthy discussions which already enlivened the public-houses were beginning to bear their fruit. There was a sort of murmur throughout the whole area of the borough, a murmur which in places rose to a roar.

It had been arranged by the agents of the two

parties that the car of Mr. Clutterbuck's host should accidentally meet that of Lord Henfield in front of the Cap and Bells. There was some little delay, and it was at first feared that the light would not be strong enough for the photographer who was waiting concealed at an adjoining window. Luckily, before it was too late, and when Mr. Stephens's car had waited less than ten minutes, Lord Henfield's appeared at the opposite end of the street, the two candidates recognised each other after the first moment of surprise, descended and shook hands warmly amid the enthusiastic cheers of the considerable assemblage ; it was apparent to all no petty personal quarrel would lessen the majesty of that day's verdict.

As darkness came on the polling began to grow noticeably heavier. Oddly enough the female or lady electors, who had during daylight remained concealed, came out with the fall of evening. The middle classes, to which this class of voter chiefly belongs, have an ample leisure to record their opinion, but even those most thickly veiled preferred a late hour in which to register their votes which, so far as could be judged, were cast mainly in the National interest. In deference to the strong feeling which the sex entertains upon this matter, the returning officer had permitted the presence of pet dogs in the polling booths. It was upon these

that the Party favours were most conspicuously displayed, and it must be admitted that in the greater number of cases they were of the popular magenta hue.

Lady Henfield recorded her vote as a lodger in her husband's house a little before seven, and came out full of frisk and smile, having doubtless given her voice in favour of the name she bore.

Mrs. Clutterbuck could claim no such privilege, nor was it the least of Mr. Clutterbuck's many chagrins upon this eventful day to consider the natural mortification which his wife must have suffered, and would very probably express when occasion served, to see Lady Henfield enjoy that Englishwoman's right of which she had herself been deprived.

During the last hour before eight o'clock, there clustered an amazing throng at every booth, and the intoxication produced by the state of public feeling and the domestic habits of the neighbourhood—which were never indulged to a higher degree than upon this occasion—communicated to the best balanced and the most indifferent a certain degree of enthusiasm. Mr. Clutterbuck had snatched a hasty sandwich and a glass of lime juice at the refreshment bar in the Town Hall when the booths were declared closed and he was admitted to the counting-room.

There were few present. He and Lord Henfield were supported by perhaps half a dozen helpers and friends. The Mayor and his young nephew sat in chairs at a table at the end of the long room, to which the bundles of votes were brought as the sorters counted them. They were laid in two long lines, one for each candidate, upon this table, and the lines had all the appearance of two snakes rapidly increasing in length and running a race as to which should be longest when their growth should cease.

During all the early part of the counting the issue seemed doubtful enough. Lord Henfield, spruce, anxious, alert, walked up and down the sorting benches, turned up continually to glance at the increasing pile of votes, and as continually strolled back with an intimate companion to interest himself in the business of the sorting, a sight with which he was unfamiliar.

As for Mr. Clutterbuck, he was numb to every sensation. The day had been too much for him, and he had become quite careless as to whether he lived or died. He stood, well groomed but with leaden eyes, moving very little from his place near the mayor's table, when he chanced to gaze at the two lines of paper bundles and saw that his own was leading. It did not appear to his unpractised eye to be any considerable lead; the one

line was now perhaps a yard long, the other possibly forty inches. But to the trained observation of those who had seen half a dozen contests in the borough, it was decisive.

Mr. Maple whispered hoarsely:

"You're in!"

And Mr. Clutterbuck answered without a voice:

"Am I?"

There were but few more bundles to come. The most of them perhaps were added to Lord Henfield's column, but they did not redress the balance.

Lord Henfield's companion, looking as pleasant as he could, pulled out a £5 note which that nobleman pocketed with evident satisfaction. The mayor jotted down figures upon a bit of paper; when he announced the result, Mr. Clutterbuck was elected by the overwhelming majority of 1028 on the heaviest poll the constituency had known. Something like 92 per cent. had voted upon a register not precisely new, and over 19,000—to be accurate, 19,123—votes had been recorded.

The mayor congratulated Mr. Clutterbuck upon the sweeping success, he shook hands with him and repeated the figures. He congratulated Lord Henfield upon the plucky fight he had made; he congratulated the sorters upon their accuracy, the counters upon their zeal, and the borough upon its

self-control at a time when feeling had run high. He congratulated the police upon their conduct throughout a very difficult and trying day; and he was in the act of congratulating the borough council in the same connection, when a wild roar outside the building showed that the result had been betrayed or guessed.

They adjourned hurriedly to the great hall over the portico. The window was open, and so far as the glare from within the room would permit them, they perceived an enormous mob, filling the whole square and stretching far into the streets which converged upon it. The deafening noises which had startled them in the inner recesses of the counting room were as nothing to the hurricane of shouts, cheers, and good-natured blasphemy which swirled about them when they appeared at the balcony. In vain did the mayor, with a pleasant smile upon his face which the darkness alone concealed, raise his hands a dozen times to impose silence. The swaying of the crowd, the cries of those who suffered pressure against the walls upon its exterior parts, nay, the occasional crash of broken glass, seemed only to add to the frenzy.

An individual who, I am glad to say, turned out to be a youth of irresponsible demeanour, caused a moment's panic by firing a pistol. The mayor,

with admirable promptitude, took the opportunity of the silence that followed to read out the figures. They were not heeded, but the renewed bellowing which followed their announcement was more eloquent than any mere statement of the majority could have been. The populace were wild with joy at their victory, and that portion of them who as bitterly mourned defeat would have been roughly handled had they not numbered quite half this vast assembly of human beings.

When some measure of silence had been achieved, Mr. Clutterbuck and Lord Henfield shook hands for the second time that day in a public manner, to the supreme delight of both friend and foe.

Mr. Clutterbuck recited in an inaudible croak the few courteous and manly words which he had prepared for the occasion, and Lord Henfield, a little before Mr. Clutterbuck had completed his last sentence, delivered, in much louder but equally inaudible tones, his apology for defeat, and his prophecy that he would be more successful upon the next occasion.

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Before Mr. Clutterbuck could be allowed to go back to the hospitable roof at Bongers End, he was required to visit his Committee Rooms and to address the workers. His mind was still a blank, but he bowed to them civilly enough and emitted

some few hoarse whispers thanking them for their unfailing courage, tact, loyalty, gentlemanly feeling, tireless industry, exhaustive labours and British pluck. For a moment, and only for a moment, the memory of the bag of sovereigns swept over his mind. He was too tired to heed even that memory, and he almost fell into his chair when he had concluded.

It must be confessed that the workers were a trifle disappointed; their honest faces, upon many of which the growth of a three-days' beard denoted their unremitting attention to the duties before them, looked anxiously above their thick neckcloths as though they had expected something more from the man upon whom the eyes of all England were turned, and whose conspicuous position they had largely helped him to attain. The situation was solved by Mr. Maple, who, in a voice worthy of that occasion or of any other, addressed the workers as his fellows and his equals—for had he not himself begun life as a working man?—and reiterated with manly enthusiasm, not only the legitimate praise accorded them by the exhausted Mr. Clutterbuck, but his own frequently expressed admiration of their self-denial, zeal, sincerity, conviction, spontaneous, unflagging hope and indomitable courage.

"Gentlemen," he concluded, and gentlemen was surely the term for these loyal-hearted men, "we

thank you from the bottom of our hearts, not because you have returned Mr. Clutterbuck—don't think that ! What is a man in such mighty moments as these ? No, but because you have saved the great principle that . . ."

The remaining three words of his peroration were lost in a frenzy of applause. The platform rose and bowed, and as refreshments could not be given (under the " Corrupt Practices Act ") within the precincts of the building, the proceedings terminated with a hearty handshake all round and the immediate dispersion of the audience to another place.

When they reached home, Mr. Clutterbuck's kind host, though himself an abstainer, opened a bottle of champagne, not indeed for Mr. Clutterbuck, whose principles he well knew, but for Mrs. Clutterbuck, his wife, to whom was given the toast of honour, for Mr. Maple, for Mr. Maple's nephew and his two sons, and a Mr. and Mrs. Charles, who between them did honour to the bottle, and very soon despatched it ; then, in the midst of hearty thanks and renewed congratulations, each party left for its home.

And that night at last, after so many nights, Mr. Clutterbuck was permitted to sleep, and slept.

He was a Member of Parliament.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Mickleton election was a blow that sounded through England. The hardy mountaineers of Wales, to whom our discussions, save where they regard religion, so rarely appeal, knew that the manhood of the slate quarries was free; sailors, newly landed from distant climes, though singularly apathetic as a class to the glories of our party system, found themselves expected to lift one of their many glasses to the Mickleton election; and in the bowels of the earth the brawny miners of Durham alluded to Mr. Clutterbuck and his success in the simplest and most poignant of terms.

The thoughtful who direct the development of English Socialism had seen, long before, the capital nature of the crisis, and naturally deplored an expression of public opinion which by forbidding forced labour set so powerful an obstacle in the path of the ideal state; the strict party organs of the Opposition were also bound to deplore the result, but every sheet of independent position was agreed as to the significance of the election and

few judges indeed since Jeffries have incurred the epithets, whether grave or severe, which had so long been withheld, and now, on the morrow of the election, fell from all sides upon the honest but narrow and pointed head of Mr. Justice Hunnybubble—for Welch (concurring) was by now quite ignored, and the stronger man was the target of renown.

The wide field of suburban, colonial, American and Indian thought commanded by the *Spectator* might indeed have murmured at the new privilege which the working classes threatened to acquire, had not that review with singular manliness and courage stood out at the critical moment with a strong declaration in favour of the spirit which Mickleton had shown.

"England," the editor did not hesitate to pen, "is not tied to a formula or a syllogism, but to freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent," * and he went so far as to contemplate with unflinching courage—nay, to command—the release of Fishmonger and Another, for whom the principal Halls had already begun an active competition.

The very different world which is so largely influenced by the *Winning Post* was equally sound, and the weekly character, "In a Glass House," of that powerful instrument of national opinion was Mr. Clutterbuck himself, characterised as a sports-

* Tennyson.

man, excused for his personal sobriety, portrayed in a top hat, frock coat, trousers, spats, buttoned boots, and perhaps thirty years less than his actual age.

The *Sporting Times* had two good jokes heartily sympathetic with the judgment of Mickleton. *Punch* published upon the great verdict a set of beautiful verses which will long be remembered in our English parsonages; and the *Daily Mail* headed their leader "The Burial of Harmanism."

England was awake; the great principle of unilateral compulsion had taken firm root, and never more would the detestable miasma of Continental pedantry threaten the free life of our land.

For the Government the position was not easy, though it was evidently one to be faced. No Administration can afford to treat the Bench lightly. Buffle might be in trouble any day. They had, moreover, at least three great measures in hand, commanding no considerable popular support; one which the electorate had not heard of and another quite odious to it. This sudden and spontaneous demonstration by a London borough against a judicial decision which had nothing to do with party or policy was a factor of grave disturbance in that routine of the House of Commons which is as regular in its way as the breathing of a profound sleep. The Cabinet was dispersed in

Monte Carlo, Devonshire, Palermo and New York, a decision could not be come to upon so grave a matter for many days to come, and yet an early opening of the session in January was plainly imperative. The intensity of feeling against the judgment which Mr. Clutterbuck's election had condemned, grew with every day, and the young head of the National party, who suffered somewhat from the right lung and filled the Premiership so brilliantly and so well, had indeed a heavy problem to resolve.

* * * * *

The first act of Mr. Clutterbuck when he returned, the morning after his triumph, to his beautiful Surrey home, was to sign a cheque for yet another thousand pounds, and to enclose it with a letter of heartfelt emotion to the funds of the Party. He expressed in this letter his indifference to the particular object for which, in the Party's judgment, it might be used, and assured Mr. Delacourt that it was but a slight acknowledgement on his part of what was the duty of every man in support of those principles which have made England great. Charlie Fitzgerald thoroughly approved of his action, and was free to point out that its spontaneous character would render it of double effect. To this action there succeeded an interval of repose.

For several weeks a round of social recreation

dispelled the strain to which Mr. Clutterbuck had been subjected during the course of his campaign ; his house was filled with a perpetually changing attendance of friends to enjoy a few days of his company, and to congratulate him upon the honour of which he had proved worthy. Nor did many of them forget to hint—some of them deliberately declared—that it was but the gate to further and greater honours : though it must be admitted that the now ageing politician neither desired nor expected promotion to Cabinet rank.

As the procession of City men, Croydon acquaintances and earlier friends who had now rallied to Mr. Clutterbuck in his declining years filled "the Plâs," Charlie Fitzgerald very honourably took the holiday he had heartily earned. He went down, at Mary Smith's pressing invitation, to her quiet but historic Habberton upon the borders of Exmoor, found there the society of his boyhood, and was the life of that little party, with his amusing imitations of social customs in the suburbs, his frank pleasure in the champagne which he had chosen for his cousin, his madcap bouts upon the little Devon ponies which were incapable of throwing so large a rider, and his jests which never exceeded the limits imposed by the presence of women, several of whom were devout adherents of the Christian faith.

With all this a certain new glory surrounded Charlie, a glory reflected from the result of the Mickleton election. The people among whom he was for the moment a companion at quiet but historic Habberton were not of a kind to exaggerate the influence of a by-election upon the general scheme of English government; but they did appreciate that here was one of themselves who could weigh the temper of a great constituency and could understand very different classes of men; for Charlie was not slow to let them understand the part he had played in the business.

During any mention of that campaign his cousin Nobby looked so thoroughly miserable that it went to Charlie's soft Irish heart.

Nobby had had plenty of money once. He had stood for Parliament when he was barely of age, more as a freak and to please his mother than with serious intentions of political life; but a defeat by over 3000 votes coupled with the gradual dissipation of his fortune had rendered him more sensitive than was perhaps healthy. A place had been found for him in the Heralds' College, but the salary was miserably small, and apart from the prestige of such a position, he would almost have been willing to throw up the perpetual application it demanded and to go and live quietly hunting and shooting at his mother's place in Derbyshire: for though the

widow had herself but a small dower, she could afford to receive her spendthrift son.

It was a good thing that he had not yet completed that intention; for Charlie, as he watched him in those days at Habberton, found a piece of work for him which might well lead to greater things. He took his cousin out one morning to see the stags fed in the new Bethlehem, warned Mary Smith that they wanted to be alone, and as they crossed the park he proposed to Nobby a visit to The Plâs.

Nobby could see nothing in it at all; nay, he met the proposition with horror, until it dawned upon him that perhaps some definite and tangible action was in the wind, and he asked in the most natural manner whether he could look forward to any of the Ready?

Charlie was impatient.

"My good Nobby," he said, "don't you know how things are done in this world? They're bound to give him a handle!"

"That," said Nobby in a refined manner, "makes my dream come true, but really, if you think it affects me——"

"God God!" said Charlie, "don't you see where you come in?"

"I could go and pump him," said Nobby wearily, "but, oh lord, Charlie, if you only knew! I must

have pumped fifty of 'em this year. The worst are the Johnnies that want Supporters. We'll give them Mullets and even a Fesse Argent or two, but we're very rigid about Supporters," he said solemnly. "You don't get Supporters over the counter, I can tell you."

"Nobby," said Charlie, waving all this trash aside, "to put it plainly, you got to go and tell the old boy how it's done . . . I mean . . . you got to let him know how it's done. Don't make a fool of yourself," he added, looking doubtfully at his young cousin, and wondering whether this piece of generosity were wise or not, "I'm not going to be butchered to make a Roman holiday."

"I'll go, Charlie," said Nobby humbly, "I understand. But can't anyone see to something of the Ready? After all, I've got to get there, and I shall have to give something to the servants."

"I'll ask Mary," said Charlie nobly.

"No you don't," shouted Nobby, "she turned me down this morning. Damnably!"

"Oh, but this is work," said Charlie reproachfully.

Nobby looked grim. "It's spondulicks, anyway," he said. And Charlie very reluctantly pulled out four pounds and a few shillings.

Nobby pocketed it without much gratitude.

"You know, Nobby," said Charlie, watching his

expression, "if you pull it off sensibly, he won't forget you!"

"Oh, I know all about that," said Nobby wearily. "They're awfully grateful, but one never gets one's fingers on the flimsies. I'll make a last shot, anyhow."

Charlie Fitzgerald did not stand on ceremony; he knew the kind hearts of the Clutterbucks too well; he wrote a longish letter to Mrs. Clutterbuck about his cousin Robert in the Heralds' College, introduced a word or two about his late father and grandfather, the Lord Storrington of the famine, said the lad would be stopping in their neighbourhood and would really like to come over, enclosed a stamped envelope, "The Hon. Robert Parham, Habberton Park, Barnstaple," and within forty-eight hours Nobby, carefully primed as to where he had been stopping in the neighbourhood of Croydon, and whom exactly he would see and meet, was off to pass a week-end at The Plâs.

His ironical temper and obvious poverty seemed at first ill-suited to the merchant's table, but Mrs. Clutterbuck herself forgave him when she discovered, as she immediately did, the warm heart which lay beneath these external disabilities: by the Sunday night his conversation was already absorbing; she begged him to return, and he did.

The second visit was far prolonged. They could

not bear to let the merry boy go, and his frank anecdotes upon the leading men of the day, intimate acquaintance with most of whom he could proudly claim, afforded them not only amusement, but the deeper pleasure of a profound interest, and it was in connection with these that he took such frequent occasion to deride the too facile conference of titles which, as he perpetually affirmed, was the jest of the world in which he moved.

He quoted more than one case in which without any subscription to objects of public utility, wealthy men, merely because they were wealthy, had been granted a baronetcy; he joked about his work in the Heralds' College, contrasting such gewgaws as parvenus descend to buy, with the honest old yeoman crest upon the silver of his host, and was especially severe upon the establishment of fixed prices for public honours; a practice which he declared almost worse than the granting of titles to the unworthy.

Of the guests who listened to him with the respect due to an expert, few ventured to contradict or even to criticise, but it must be admitted that Sir Julius Mosher, who had been knighted years ago on the occasion of Cornelius Hertz's reception at the Guildhall, was inclined one evening at Mr. Clutterbuck's table to be a trifle interrogatory.

"I never gave a penny," he said, "and I think I

may say that for most men in the City," he added, looking round the table and meeting with a murmur of approval.

"I would never dream of saying such a thing," said Nobby warmly. He blushed a little, but looked at the same time so kindly and so sincere that his embarrassment did but enhance the good opinion all had formed of the young man.

"Thank God there are still some honours left that *are* honours! Now, I suppose nearly all the new peers . . . take the new peers . . . nobody minds; and then most baronets . . . since *this* Government came in. . . . Still they *did* pay. And I do say what I most hate in the whole affair is regular prices fixed. It isn't cricket."

"But, after all," said a Mr. Hutchinson, a doctor of considerable means, and of a solid, quiet judgment. "What do you mean by 'fixed'?" He put up his hand to dissuade interruption, and to Nobby's horror opened in the intonation of a set speech: "Remember the importance of what you are saying. Chrm! You are in the Heralds' College, and you hear a great many things. Chrm! No one denies for a moment that large subscriptions to some public object are often rewarded by some public honour. . . . I may be a little easy-going, but I really don't see any harm in it. Everybody knows it is—er—done; the recipients are worthy men and they are just the

kind of men who have always been made knights and baronets, and even peers when they were important enough."

The brief discourse was well and clearly delivered; it earned the gratitude of all those older men around the table in whom the art of living had bred common sense and to whom short speeches at dinner were familiar; to do justice to Nobby, he was the first to let his sense of justice return.

"You mustn't take me too seriously," he said in his decent smiling way. "One talks in shorthand. I don't mean a real tariff, nobody could mean that, but I think that in the past, 'specially about ten years ago, turn of the century and with all the fuss of the war on, they *did* hand things about. . . . Oh, there were orders as well, you know."

Mrs. Clutterbuck smiled at him from the head of the table. "No one blames you, I'm sure," she said. "But Mr. Parham there was not too much recognition of the people who stood by their country then." She looked meaningly at her husband. "I'm sure if you made a list of those pro-Boers who've been . . ."

"Half time, Mrs. Clutterbuck, half time," said Sir Julius Mosher kindly. He had been among the most prominent opponents of our Colonial policy at that moment, and he felt bound to protest against the word Pro-Boer, but his protest was singularly

sweet and winning and did not for a moment disturb the harmony of the evening.

The ladies retired, not to the Persian room which was rarely inhabited in winter, but to the snuggery. Nobby held the door for them as they went out, and added to his laurels by the perfect apology he made for tearing Lady Mosher's train.

The conversation between the men drifted on to other subjects, foxhunting, lithia water, the Territorial army, and all the rest upon which men of this stamp are particularly engaged ; while Dr. Hutchinson, who feared he might have offended the enthusiastic young fellow, took a chair by his side, and upon Nobby's mentioning the name of his grandfather, Lord Storrington, furnished the most interesting and voluminous details upon that nobleman's last illness, operation, and death.

Much later, when all the rest had said good-night, Nobby, who loved a farewell glass, followed his host to the old smoking-room, preserving his balance in the dark corridor by a hand upon either wall. They sat together exchanging the common-places that will pass between newly found friends when they are at last alone, until Mr. Clutterbuck, who had spent a few moments with his wife arranging matters for the following day, turned to a subject he could not wholly ignore, and said with perfect tact :

"I beg your pardon, but now that we're alone, tell me, how much really is there in what you were saying? I know there's more in it than those gentlemen say, and you think there's more in it, don't you?" For Mr. Clutterbuck, like many men newly introduced to the necessary compromises and halftones of our manifold political life, was still ready to receive secrets that seemed to him dramatic and to criticise from close at hand methods which during the most of his life he had only known as vague rumours.

Nobby very thoughtfully chose from the silver box beside him a gigantic cigar, and said, holding the matchbox in his hand ready to strike:

"Tell you the truth, there's precious little," and having said that he laughed with the laugh of a boy, and suddenly subsided into his chair.

"Well, but," said Mr. Clutterbuck, without insistance, "there must be this much in it, that a man who sacrifices more than a certain amount and is known to be a hearty supporter of the tariff, for instance, or of the evacuation of Egypt, or . . . or let's say what the Government did last June in Burmah would be noticed, I suppose?"

"Oh yes," said Nobby, speaking as of a commonplace. "But that's true of course of anything. If a man's known to 've done something *really* handsome, silly not to recognise him. 'Sides which,

it's *done*, always done. What I was complainin' of was the people who really haven't got any claim at all. F'r instance," he said, lowering his voice and looking over his shoulder for a moment, "Johnnie Higgins. . . ."

"Sir John Higgins?" said Mr. Clutterbuck, startled at the name of that prominent country gentleman.

"Yes," went on Nobby simply, "Johnnie *Higgins* wouldn't 've had anything in the course of nature. Of course he *wanted* it, and he hasn't got a son, an' one way an' another. . . . But still, there *was* the regulation price of five thousand."

"Well, five thousand," said Mr. Clutterbuck, his head bent well backwards, his eyes regarding the ceiling, and his tone expressing the enormity of the sum——

"No, but," continued Nobby, up on his feet again,—"I *do* object, and so would you if you were where I am; five thousand means different things to different men; now just because a man is in parliament and weighs in with five thousand. . . ."

Here he was silent. He had some regard for truth and he felt that his temperament was running away with him. How many men he could call to mind who had given first and last twenty, thirty, forty thousand pounds to some great cause and had remained the plain commoners they were born. It

would have been well for him and for his host if he had spoken aloud as the confession passed through his thought, but Nobby was as weak as he was good-natured and that thought remained unexpressed.

Mr. Clutterbuck continued his theme. Financial success had bred in him a dependence upon fact and figure. Five thousand pounds was a very large sum, but it was tangible ; it was precise ; one could write it down.

"I know men," he said slowly, "to whom that would be a capital: believe me, a considerable capital. Why, there's Doctor Hutchinson," he said, lowering his voice, and bending forward, "if you will believe me" (in still lower tones) "that man hasn't got five thousand now. He's not worth it." He pressed his lips together as men do after a final statement, and said by way of conclusion: "They're all like that, that call themselves 'professional men.' Here to-day and gone to-morrow, except they take out a patent or something, or really go in for business, and precious few can do that."

"You're quite right," said Nobby, who was bored and who had been thinking anxiously about the hour of next morning's breakfast. "I never had any myself," he added genially, and Mr. Clutterbuck smiled at the jest of the grandson of the Earl of

the Creation of the year of the Act of the Union of England and of Ireland.

Nobby yawned and sloshed soda water into his glass. "Well, it's a lot of rot, isn't it?" he said, and clinched the conversation down.

They went up to bed that night, Mr. Clutterbuck, after apologising, as husbands will, for the lateness of the hour, turned many of his remarks to his wife upon this corrupt practice, weighing its probabilities and its exaggerations, until that lady first passed judgment and then imposed silence.

* * * * *

Charlie Fitzgerald should have been home upon the Wednesday next. A chance whim had taken him to Monte Carlo, from whence he telegraphed that he could hardly be back before Saturday. In the interval Mr. Clutterbuck, sauntering into town upon one of those clear December days which often prolong autumn into the heart of winter, happened to call at Delacourt's house, but he was at the office at Peter Street. Mr. Clutterbuck immediately sought him in that place and was received with something more cordial than courtesy, and many a merry laugh was exchanged between himself and the young organiser before the chief business of his visit was mentioned.

Even when the time came for that, Mr. Clutterbuck showed unaccountable nervousness, but he

had taken full counsel; he knew his wife's opinion; his own mind was made up; he had not even waited for Charlie Fitzgerald. When, therefore, he had said good-bye and was just stepping out of the door he suddenly, as though by an afterthought, pulled an envelope from his pocket and said sunnily:

"Oh, Mr. Delacourt, I'd almost forgotten this. I could have posted it—but it's just as well to give it you now I have it. Read it at your leisure. Read it absolutely at your leisure."

He nodded twice and was gone.

Mr. Delacourt opened the envelope, fully expecting some little protest or other. To his wild astonishment there came out a note of not more than four lines, and a cheque for £3000.

Bozzy Delacourt had seen a good deal of life; he had pawned many articles before his father's death, and had mortgaged not a little land between that event and his marriage. He had seen many cheques signed by many men for many purposes; but the like of this he had never seen.

"What the devil!" he said, looking at the cheque as one would at a strange and unexpected beast. "What the devil——" He went over to the window, leant against it and murmured to himself: "If he's mad something ought to be done. He might make a scene in the House. By God!" he added to himself with a sudden change of expression, "it would

be Maraschino and Ice to see him passing the stuff on to one of those journalists during a division, or endowing the p'licemen, or something. . . . Wish I'd known men like that in '92! I'd have pulled old Sam Lewis's leg." The thought set his eyes adream and afire. "I'd have played him," he added with sudden vicious earnestness, "I'd have played him like a bloody fish!"

And having thus relieved his mind, he prepared the cheque for passing it in, then thought he'd better show it to his chiefs, locked it into a particular drawer, and went out.

CHAPTER IX

THE sacred season of Christmas was approaching and Charlie Fitzgerald had returned.

He had not been lucky at Monte Carlo. I do not only mean in the favourite amusement of that place, which he had indulged in for no more than the first day of his visit, for his means were restricted, but also in the weather and the company he found. For the anniversary of the Birth of Christ had drawn from the Riviera to their respective homes many in that cultured cosmopolitan world which held the most intimate of his friends.

He returned, therefore, to The Plâs not in ill humour—that he could never show—but a little sobered and now and then a little sad. When Mr. Clutterbuck exposed to him in full the action he had seen fit to take, no one could have been more sympathetic than he.

"It was a large thing to do, Clutterbuck," he said as they strolled round the garden arm in arm, "but I think it was a wise one."

The afternoon was mild, it had not rained for several hours, and the paths were dry. Charlie Fitzgerald, thinking of what to say next, threw a pebble or two into the lake, and then went on :

"Abroad, of course, they don't understand this Fishmonger business ; but they do understand that there's a change in English politics . . . we've come to a sort of turning-point," he said thoughtfully, somewhat in the same tone as men talked of the Labour Party years before. "The old party divisions have changed ; I don't know whether you like it or whether you don't ; I've never made up my mind ; but you're on the crest of the wave of the change, and you can't help it."

Mr. Clutterbuck surveyed the breadth of the English dale, the woods of Surrey and his own great house ; he felt the responsibility and the burden of the high function which England had thrust upon him.

"I shall try to do my duty," he said humbly.

And the two types—the Anglo-Saxon and the Celt—were constrained to a common silence for some moments. Then Mr. Clutterbuck said again : "I shall try to do my duty."

Charlie Fitzgerald was really moved. "You couldn't have done better," he said. "In politics it is absolutely necessary to be hall-marked in some way ; and men like you, who can't stoop to eccen-

tricity, are much better when they are hall-marked by a simple honour. *I* know, and I dare say you know, that they'd have given it to you long ago, but you never wanted it, you never asked for it—and I don't mind telling you they think the better of you."

Mr. Clutterbuck was deeply touched; men of his sort do not always understand how much they gain or lose by their simplicity, and it is pleasant to know that such a quality in one's soul has made one beloved.

"They'd have given it you on the King's birthday last year, said Fitzgerald with quiet emphasis, "and they'd have given it just before I came here: Bozzy talked of it openly. Since I've been here they haven't said anything."

"They haven't had occasion to, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Clutterbuck.

"No," answered Fitzgerald, "and it doesn't do to rush things. Besides which, the obvious thing is the New Year."

"I suppose," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "that one knows more or less—I mean—there's some sort of warning given one, because after all there's a kind of ceremony—in some cases, I mean," he added hurriedly.

"Oh yes," said Fitzgerald airily. "They let you know all right: five or six days beforehand;

but it's quite informal. I remember my sister's great friend, that Egyptologist fellow"—he sought for the name—"well, anyhow, the man who wrote that account of Milner in Egypt and signed it Mayfield—can't remember his name, but I remember his just being told—Meyer! that's it—Ernest Meyer!—I remember his being told casually through somebody else. Sometimes they don't do it. Teeling didn't know about *his* baronetcy till he landed, and that was ten days afterwards."

The conversation frittered away, but Fitzgerald knew what to do. Next day he forced himself upon Delacourt, dined with him: and took occasion to ask his cousin how things stood, and he learned, to his no small embarrassment, that headquarters thought his employer had been precipitate.

"Well, but look here, Bozzy," he said, as they went across Westminster Bridge together to the Canterbury to see the Philadelphians. "It's not much of a business: if a man's got the big election of one's time, and all the Press behind him, and everybody waiting for the new session, and *then* shells out—I don't care how—really! It ought to be like taking it off a shelf."

"Well, but it isn't," said Bozzy, as they took their tickets.

All through the evening at intervals between the turns they pursued the matter jerkily, and Charlie

Fitzgerald was curious to note his cousin's singular obstinacy. Bozzy was quite fixed about it. Headquarters were annoyed.

"It isn't so simple. To begin with, it'll look like being frightened of Mickleton; and then Billingshurst and Dangerfield are dead against this stinking Fishmonger agitation anyhow. Dangerfield is Hunnybubble's brother-in-law, for what that's worth, and altogether it's not the time. Number one *certainly* won't do it *yet*: not a measly V.O. Told me so himself."

Charlie Fitzgerald had a very simple reply. "If it isn't in the New Year list," he said, "he'll make trouble, and I don't blame him."

"How *can* he make trouble?" said Bozzy uneasily.

At this point a very large man in uniform interfered, and they were compelled to listen to a ventriloquist who imitated with astounding fidelity the barking of a little dog, enclosed by accident in an ottoman.

As they went out and recrossed the bridge, Charlie would not release his cousin; he dragged him towards the station and plied him still.

"It really *is* a big thing," he pleaded.

"Good God!" said Bozzy, losing his temper at or about that point in Victoria Street where the proud embassy of Cape Colony lifts its flag in the

heart of the Empire. "Don't pester me, I'm not the Prime Minister!"

"Very well," said Charlie quietly, "I'll go and see *him*."

"Oh, do that by all means," said Bozzy, enormously relieved, "but don't get to Downing Street before three; he refuses everything steadily from after lunch till three o'clock. Then he takes that stuff Helmsley ordered him, and a few minutes afterwards he does everything for everybody; at least that's the only way I account for the two last appointments."

It was a cynical and a stupid thing to say of a man as hardworking and as capable as the young Prime Minister of England, who had led the National Party to success less than two years before; and who, moreover, was known to be suffering from an affection of the left lung; but there was this much truth in it, that all men have their hours: no more.

Charlie Fitzgerald brought home news that evening which lifted Mr. Clutterbuck's heart. He would not commit himself, but he told him very plainly that he had seen his cousin, that his cousin could not speak for the Government (and, after all, that was common-sense!), but that he, Charlie, was to see the Prime Minister the next day.

The truth looks very different to different men, and all external verities must, alas, be stated in mere

human terms ; this plain and just and honest phrase "and I'm to see the Prime Minister to-morrow," sank into Mr. Clutterbuck's mind with a very different effect from that which it could produce upon the experienced and travelled intellect of the man who spoke it.

His secretary was to see the Prime Minister the next day ! It seemed more to Mr. Clutterbuck than it does to the delicately nurtured youth of England when they hear in the morning of their lives that they are to see the elephant at the Zoo. It had a thousand ritual connotations : it was the power, the kingdom and the glory. He felt it odd to be in the same room with his secretary.

How could that secretary, who had called the present Prime Minister "Uncle Dunk" since he could first lisp a word, know of what it was that passed in the new member's heart ?

At dinner Mr. Clutterbuck very properly forebore to allude to such matters in the remotest manner before the very large and varied assembly of guests. Nor were he and his secretary alone together during any part of the remainder of the evening.

Next morning with the reticence that sits so well upon our wealthier men, he did no more than accompany Fitzgerald from the luncheon-room to the motor, help him in, and shake him warmly by the hand as he went off.

Fitzgerald, wisely remembering his cousin's somewhat petulant advice, sent no warning before him, but turned up at Downing Street a little before four. His reception was very cordial. They had known each other from the time when Charlie was in petticoats, a baby, in and out of Mary Smith's house in the height of its splendour, and the Prime Minister a young man, almost a boy himself, fresh from his victory in the Isle of Dogs and the idol of that Free Trade Unionist section which he had since triumphantly transformed into the National Party after his acceptance of the Round Table Tariff in 1909.

Charlie did not waste five minutes in coming to the point, and he put it with a simplicity that did him honour. He let the head of the Government talk upon the bigness of the Mickleton election and upon the way in which it had caught the Press, and when it was his turn to speak he quietly took it for granted that Mr. Clutterbuck's name would appear among the New Year's honours.

But there was a great deal more in the Prime Minister than met the naked eye; he shook his head with a determination of which the ballast was his big bulging forehead with its rare wisp of hair, and he said:

"All that's been thought about, Charlie."

Fitzgerald got quite red. He saw danger and was annoyed.

"You *are* making a fuss," he said.

"No, I'm not," said the Prime Minister kindly.

"You don't mean to say you're not going to do it?" said Fitzgerald.

"Of course we are, but not before the House meets. It would bind us. It can't be done," he said.

"You mean 't'd look like reversing the judgment by statute?"

"Charlie," said the other, somewhat gravely, you're too old to ask 'why.'" He smiled at him a little quizzically.

"Then when you mean to do it?" said Fitzgerald.

"Oh, I really don't know."

The Prime Minister had occasion to go out, and they went out together, but Charlie, when he left him a few moments later, was feeling a good many things. He was feeling that he had weakened his own position in one house at least, and that he had done it for nothing; and he determined that a lowering of position like that could not be tolerated. He easily saw the way to repair it. He would begin to put on the screw.

To Mr. Clutterbuck that evening he simply said the Prime Minister had been most delightful and

had met him halfway, and had taken the whole thing for granted, but said of course there must be a little delay.

"Of course," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "of course." In this intimacy he talked about the matter quite frankly. "I quite understand; there's a whole fortnight."

"Yes," said Charlie Fitzgerald.

It was the 15th of December.

* * * * *

It is not the custom in this country for men whom the Sovereign is pleased to honour to make a vulgar boast of their advancement; but it is inevitable that an approaching accession of social rank should be expected by the immediate circle of the recipient.

It was impossible that Mr. Clutterbuck's wife should not know; her brother also knew, of course, though perhaps he did wrong to write a long letter of congratulation: he had a claim to be told. And the Rev. Isaac Fowle as the spiritual, Dr. Hutchinson as the medical, adviser of the merchant, were naturally soon informed. Mr. Clutterbuck and his wife were far too well-bred to speak of the honour which was advancing upon them with every day that slipped from the old year; they mentioned it to none but the nearest of their friends. But a wide outer ring could not but hear the news, and a still more

extended radius received it with some little exaggeration. In Oxted, Limpsfield, and Red Hill it was a peerage; and in the remoter villages where Mr. Clutterbuck's motor-cars were familiar, it was a place in the Cabinet as well; but to all, and to no one more than the Clutterbucks, there was one thing certain, that the date was the New Year.

The Press alone—and that was a large exception—had kept silent upon the rumour.

From one day to another Charlie Fitzgerald laid siege, but Bozzy was first obdurate, then tired, then angry, and the Prime Minister he could not see again. Whether Fitzgerald were right or not in what he next did it is for posterity to judge; his first duty, he thought, was to the man whose bread and salt he ate, and three days before Christmas he got the paragraph about Mr. Clutterbuck into half the daily papers of London; every one was away from Peter Street, and the usual contradiction did not follow by return.

On Christmas Eve, during the delightful old-world party which Mrs. Clutterbuck gave to the children of the neighbourhood, their parents very openly congratulated her husband. Upon Boxing Day the savour of his triumph remained in his mouth. It was not until Wednesday the 27th that the official protest came from the office of the patronage secretary.

It would have been better for every one concerned had that protest been plain. "It is better to use the surgeon's knife than to let the cancer grow."* But Mr. Clutterbuck had been most generous. To be too harsh would be, perhaps, to close the door upon future action, and all that appeared was a line or two in very small type, to the effect that the representative of the paper (and every paper in London had it) had called at the head office in Peter Street with regard to the rumour recently published, and

"had official authority to say that the officials were prepared to say officially that little more could for the moment at least be said upon the matter."

The lines were few, I say, the print was small and the prose bad, but such as they were they did but confirm the rumour which meant so much to two simple hearts, and might have meant more to the public as an indication of the coming policy of the Government in the matter of Fishmonger and Another.

Charlie Fitzgerald sat tight, and the old year waned.

A gathering, even larger than those which Mr. Clutterbuck had summoned during the sacred season just passed, gladly and happily drank out

* The Dean of Portsmouth, "Mixed Sermons," vol. iii. p. 465. Heintz & Sons. 42*s.* London: 1910.

the old year. They sang Auld Lang Syne with hands across, and many another dear old song of friendship and remembrance, and not a few at the close of the evening departed with a vague conception that religion had presided at their feast.

So ended that year 1911 in a night glorious with keen and flashing stars. It was a year which had done many great and perilous things for England, but it was one of which every one could say in his heart, with the Prophet Ozee,* "It *was* good!"

* * * * *

The first of January 1912 was, as many of my readers will know, a Monday. The happy new week and the happy new year opened together with a radiant frost upon the beautiful Vale of Caterham. The ice on the artificial lake supported with ease the Japanese ducks, its inhabitants, and Mr. Clutterbuck rose from bed, a man advanced in the Commonwealth and younger by ten years.

He was in no haste to read the great news, but he was down before his secretary or his wife. He could not forbear to glance casually at the *Times*, which lay unopened on the breakfast table. He scanned the honours list in a casual fashion and made sure that he had missed his name. He went out and spoke to the stable-boy in a very happy voice, as of one who can easily arrange and uplift

* Ozee, xvii. 8.

the lives of others; but the stable-boy was strangely silent, as he thought, and he was annoyed to see Astor lunge out a vicious kick. He came back into the house and picked up the *Times* again. He was astonished to note that the list was alphabetical; at least it was alphabetical for the baronets. There were a great number of C's, but there was no Clutterbuck. Sir Percy—Percy was the name he had chosen—Sir Percy Clutterbuck; it was not there!

Mr. Clutterbuck was a business man. He was not one of those who pin themselves to the mechanical accuracy of mechanical things. He did not, as women do, glance at a cloçk and take its dial to mark the exact hour; still less did he glance at the quotations of prices in the *Times* and believe, as the widows and the orphans do, that one may buy and sell indifferently, at the precise figures mentioned. He looked at the knights, but in the knights there was not even a C, unless I mention Sir Sebastian Cohen, who had acquired the dignity in the Barbadoes.

His mind would have suffered the mortal chill had not Hope remained in the box; and Hope, which never quite leaves men, does something more, for it often suggests the truth at last. He remembered the orders. The Bath he could neglect; but he remembered the Victorian Order, and others. It

would be a strange way of doing things, but who could tell? He glanced down a complicated list, and St. Michael was there, and St. George, and the late Queen also, Victoria. . . . But there was no Clutterbuck.

Before he had finished the list, bending over it almost double on the low table, he was unpleasantly aware that his wife and his secretary were in the room. He bolted upright, left the paper, and said there was no news from the Congo.

Mr. Clutterbuck very properly prided himself upon a power of self-control; his wife did not open the paper in his presence. He took his secretary after breakfast out into the bright frosty air near the plantation. He told Fitzgerald all, and then said simply:

"Mr. Fitzgerald, will you do something for me?"

Fitzgerald was very willing.

"Will you go up to London in the Renault," (the Limousine was under repair) "and find out about this?"

Charlie Fitzgerald was in the Renault within an hour.

At lunch Mrs. Clutterbuck did not like to ask her husband any questions, but she wrote to the guests that there was illness in the house; she put them off with a heavy heart, for one never knows

when one's expected guests may be one's guests again.

Charlie Fitzgerald was back before dinner, He said that Bozzy was out of town, but that a clerk had heard there was a mistake and that it would be rectified in a few days.

Therefore Wednesday passed, but Thursday was very ominous, and again Charlie Fitzgerald was unconvinced. He knew too much of men to wait for any questions. He was on the telephone long before breakfast, and when Mr. Clutterbuck came down he saw his secretary, dressed ready for driving into London.

"If Bozzy isn't in," said he, "I'll get out into Essex and see Morris. He's perfectly certain to know. But," he added, "I may be out all night."

Mr. Clutterbuck gloomily assented and the lonely house was deprived for thirty-six hours of the Irish grace and light which radiated from that young soul.

On the Friday afternoon, in a storm of rain, Charlie Fitzgerald returned. The panting of the car was still heard as he broke into the smoking-room dripping wet and took his employer, at once by the arm, into the gallery.

"It's a mistake in one way," he said, "but Bozzy says it isn't a real mistake. Your name was down but they didn't sign."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Clutterbuck, almost in tears, "*I'm* going in to London." And next day into London he went.

Bozzy was out, but at the central office they greeted him with enthusiasm, and spoke to him of current affairs, of his great victory at Mickleton, of the wonderful enthusiasm of the Press, but all he said upon the honours list and upon the recognition of others was met with nothing more substantial than rapid affirmatives and very hearty smiles.

He went back in bitterness of spirit towards Victoria and on the way he met William Bailey sailing down Bird Cage Walk like a great wingless, long-legged bird, empty of everything for the moment but an infantile joy. He was right upon him before William Bailey recognised him, but when that eccentric did so he seized him by both hands and hearing of his destination, marched him westward.

"We never finished that conversation, did we, Clutterbuck?" he said.

Mr. Clutterbuck vaguely remembered the evening at Mrs. Smith's, or rather he vaguely remembered the word or two that William Bailey had spoken.

"Peabody Yid, eh?" said William Bailey in a somewhat vulgar manner, catching him in the ribs

with his elbow. "Have you learned anything more about the Peabody Yid? You City men are as thick as thieves!" And he laughed in a lower key.

"I don't understand you," said Mr. Clutterbuck in real perturbation and suffering. "I don't understand you. Can't you speak like everybody else? I'm tired of the lot!"

It was a genuine little cry of pain and William Bailey, being a fanatic, was sentimental and was saddened.

"What's up?" he said.

Mr. Clutterbuck told him. First briefly, then at length, then with passion he poured out his great wrong. The money paid, accepted—all his friends told—and then the humiliation of New Year's day.

William Bailey walked him back and forth before the Palace, then he said:

"We'll get in a cab, I shall have less time to speak in that way," and after that last paradox he talked sense; but it was very brief sense.

He simply told Mr. Clutterbuck in the short two hundred yards which led them to the station, that if he really wanted help, the unhappy William Bailey was there, and having said that, when Mr. Clutterbuck had taken his ticket and was off to the wicket, he looked for half a second into the

merchant's eyes with that strange and dangerous power which the demagogue has commanded in all ages : to the untutored mind of Mr. Clutterbuck it was a glance of singular fascination. So they parted.

CHAPTER X

WILLIAM BAILEY was at this time nearer fifty than forty years of age. Those who saw him for the first time would have imagined him to be an exceptionally vigorous and well-preserved man of maturer years, for while his eyes were energetic and lively the skin of his face had been hardened and lined by travel in very different climates. Moreover, his hair, though not scanty, had turned that peculiar steely grey which men so often preserve well on into old age.

His stature, which was considerable, he owed to a pair of very long thin legs, which looked the longer from the invariably ill-fitting loose trousers that he wore; his boots were of enormous size. These, again, were exaggerated to the ordinary beholder from his habit of purchasing pairs far too large for him; and these, I regret to say, were ready made, with square toes, very flat heels, and those offensive deep creases across the instep which betray the slovenly man.

His face, which was long and good-humoured,

was framed by two vast whiskers which seemed to belong to an earlier age. And in general his appearance, while certainly denoting ability, might have led one to expect a sort of reticent good-nature. The impression was heightened by his habit of leaning good-humouredly forward with his hands in his pockets, and a genial half-smile, to listen attentively to whatever words were addressed to him, especially if those words proceeded from an unknown man or from one who seemed proud of his acquaintance.

There were none that met him casually in the world, but expected from him the most kindly judgments and the most reasonable if independent views. They were invariably deceived.

The man had acquired peculiarities of outlook which in any society less tolerant than our own would have doomed him to isolation. As it was, the most part of his equals treated him as a joke they could afford to laugh at; but some few out of the many to whom he had given legitimate offence found themselves unable to forgive, and these were filled in his presence with an ill ease which he, of all men, had the least right to impose: among these—I bitterly regret—was even to be found that gracious, kind old man, the Duke of Battersea, who in all his long and useful life had hardly spoken harshly of a single foe.

In politics none could say whether William Bailey were National or Opposition; his religion it was impossible to discover; even those philosophies which attract in their turn most men of intelligence appeared to leave him indifferent; he was ignorant of Hegel of Nietzsche and of Oppenheim, but his opinions were none the less expressed with a violence and a tenacity which sometimes produced the illusion of a general system, though a collection of his real or affected prejudices would have proved many of them contradictory one of the other. He would rail, for instance, against the practice of drinking champagne with meat, and he would denounce it with the same fervour as he would use against things so remote from him as the Senate of Finland or the Republican party in the United States.

His dislike, or his assumed dislike, of certain English writers, notably the poet Hibbles, on which he might at least be allowed an opinion or even a prejudice (for he was admittedly a good judge of verse), was not so strong as his detestation of Tolstoi (not one word of whose works he could read in the original or had even read in translations!), or his contempt for Harnack, the very A B C of whose science he ignored. He denied with equal decision the theory of natural selection and the hypothesis of a recent glacial epoch, and had more than once committed himself to print in points of etymology

on which he knew nothing, and his excursion into which had only rendered him ridiculous.

It would be too easy to explain the man as a mere mass of opposition, though it is certain that the greater part of his enthusiasms, if enthusiasms they were, were aroused by the spectacle of some universally received opinion. It would be truer to say that he was ever ready to use his quick and not untrained intelligence in defence of chance likes and dislikes which, when he had so defended them for a sufficient time, took on in his mind a curious and unnatural hardness that sometimes approached and sometimes passed the line of complete conviction. On some points, indeed, he had been compelled to retreat. His theory that the English Press was not the property of its ostensible owners but was subsidised by a mysterious gang of foreign financiers, he discreetly dropped on finding it untenable, though for years he had startled his new acquaintances and wearied his relatives by various aspects of that particular piece of nonsense; and his repeated assertion that Japanese torpedo boats had really been present on the Dogger Bank during the deplorable incident of 1904, he had been singularly silent about after the delivery of the Paris award: but the most part of his follies survived.

He did at least pick up a new mania from time to time, which relieved the tedium of his repeated

dogmatisings; but his friends looked forward with horror to that inevitable phase which he must meet with advancing years, when the elasticity of his fanaticism should fail him, and they should be compelled to listen to an unvarying tale throughout his old age.

He was, as I have said, not fifty, but that phase seemed already arrived in one particular. He had gone mad upon the Hebrew race.

He saw Jews everywhere: he not only saw them everywhere, but he saw them all in conspiracy. He would not perhaps have told you that the conspiracy was conscious, but its effects he would have discovered all the same.

According to him Lombroso was a Jew, Mr. Roosevelt's friends and supporters the Belmonts were Jews, half the moneyed backers of Roosevelt were Jews, the famous critic Brandes was a Jew, Zola was a Jew, Nordau was a Jew, Witte was a Jew —or in some mysterious way connected with Jews; Naquet was a Jew; the great and suffering Hertz was a Jew. All actors and actresses *en bloc*, and all the foreign correspondents he could lay hands on were Jews; the late and highly respected M. de Blowitz (a fervent Catholic!) he nicknamed "Opper," and having found that a member of the very excellent West Country family of Wilbraham had ardently supported the Russian revolutionists in the columns of the *Times*, he must say, forsooth, that a

certain "Brahms" (who rapidly developed into "Abrahams") was the inspirer of the premier journal; and this mythical character so wrought upon his imagination that in a little while the manager of the paper itself, and heaven knows who else, were attached to the Synagogue.

In his eyes the governors of colonies, the wives of Viceroys, the holders of Egyptian bonds, the mortgagees of Irish lands, half the Russian patriots, and all the brave spokesmen of Hungary, were swept into the universal net of his mania.

It got worse with every passing year: there were Jews at Oxford, and at Cambridge, and at Trinity College, Dublin; the Jews overran India; they controlled the *Neue Frie Presse* of Vienna, the *Tribuna* of Rome, the *Matin* of Paris, and for all I know, the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin.

The disease advanced with his advancing age; soon all the great family of Arnold were Jews; half the English aristocracy had Jewish blood; for a little he would have accused the Pope of Rome or the Royal Family itself; and I need hardly say that every widespread influence, from Freemasonry to the international finance of Europe, was Israelite in his eyes; while our Colonial policy, and especially the gigantic and successful struggle in South Africa, he twisted into a sort of petty huckstering, dependent upon Petticoat Lane.

Mary Smith loved her brother. She did all she could to dispel these mists and to bring out that decent side of him which had made him years ago as popular a young man as any in London—but he was past praying for. A private income, large, like all the Bailey incomes, of over £4000 a year, permitted him a dangerous independence ; and in his freehold house in Bruton Street he lived his own life altogether, attached to his servants, whom he never changed, subscribing to absurd foreign papers that dripped with anti-Semitic virus, and depending upon the perpetual attention of his manservant Zachary, an honest fellow enough, but one who, from perpetual association with his master, seemed to have imbibed something of that master's eccentricities. *He* was as dandy as the gentleman who employed him was slovenly, and all Bruton Street noted with a smile the extraordinary figure the fellow made when he went out on his rare holidays, in a tight frock-coat, a hat like polished ebony, and gloves that were always new.

To individuals, as is so often the case with men of this temper and of good birth, William Bailey was often kind and sometimes positively generous. The personal enmities he bore to men whom he had actually known, were very rare, and such as they were they would take the form rather of abstaining from their society than of intriguing against them. Indeed,

characters of this sort are not usually possessed of that tenacity in action which intrigue requires. His name was mentioned with no woman's; he had never married. In early youth he was supposed to have felt some attraction to a lady considerably older than himself, who subsequently became the wife of another yet older than herself, an Anglo-Indian official of high standing. But the passion could hardly have been deep or lasting, for he preserved no relic of her in any form; he had no picture of her, he never mentioned her name, and when she returned to England from time to time, he made no effort to renew her acquaintance and seemed even to avoid her presence.

Some have attempted to attribute his violent eccentricities of judgment to disappointed ambition. His career would hardly lead one to such a conclusion. As a boy he determined upon the Army, and had greatly annoyed his family, who would have preferred the Guards, by joining the Engineers. He had not been four years a sapper when he as suddenly abandoned that honourable and useful corps, and compelled his father to use influence for his appointment as an *attaché*—of all places in the world—to Pekin. Transferred from that distant capital to Paris, he begged for Constantinople, was granted it, and within two years abandoned the career of diplomacy as light-heartedly as he had abandoned that of arms. His father's death at this

moment added to his already sufficient private means, and it was thought by such relatives as still took some interest in his talents that commercial activity would bring him into harness. A stall was purchased for him at Lloyds, and for three months he appeared to devote himself steadily to speculation. But the wisest of his relatives, especially his Aunt Winifred, still had their misgivings; they were amply justified.

In the election of 1892 which shortly followed his introduction to the City, he was asked by the family to make a third candidate in East Rutland in order to split, what was then called, the 'Liberal' vote against his brother James, who had presented himself in what was then called the 'Conservative' interest. William Bailey, naturally good-natured and thinking to enjoy the mild excitement of a short campaign, was delighted to present himself as an Independent Liberal, and until within a few days of the poll, conducted himself as the situation required, taking care to draw upon himself such votes—and no more—as might secure his brother's election. Unhappily the twisted spirit of the man got the better of him in the last week before the poll, and he fell into a deplorable breach of good taste and family feeling; he suddenly began deliberately to attract the attention and win the support of every sort of elector. To

his own considerable surprise (but it must be admitted to his secret gratification) he was returned—with what consequent and final effect upon his family relations need not be told!

During the short life of that parliament he made himself conspicuous by abstaining from the narrow and perilous divisions to which his party was subjected, by asking the most offensive personal questions of responsible Ministers, by shouting interjections which repeatedly called upon him the severe reprimand of the highly distinguished man who then occupied the Chair, and by moving, when the luck of the ballot fell his way, a motion so offensive to every loyal and generous feeling, that even the Opposition found themselves compelled to support the Government in an early adjournment to prevent its discussion.

In the early summer of 1895 he appeared to suffer a sudden conversion, spoke frequently in the most decent and weighty of parliamentary manners, was present at every division, supported his colleagues in the country and then—utterly without warning—betrayed one of the safest seats in England by refusing at the General Election to present himself again as a candidate.

A man who acts thus in our public life bars every serious career against himself. Whether Mr. Bailey had foreseen this or no, he was at any rate content

henceforward to live as a private gentleman in his little house in Bruton Street. But his restless temper still led him from one set to another, mingling with every one and seen everywhere. He wrote, he occasionally spoke, and above all it was his delight, by insinuation or by direct disclosure, to embarrass and expose his fellow-beings; a man dangerous in the extreme, and, I repeat, one whom no society less tolerant than ours would have endured for a year.

Such was the rock on which the proud ship of Mr. Clutterbuck's good fortune struck.

In a mood less irritable and less inflamed he would have been safe; but doubtful, suspicious, angered as he was he fell an easy—alas! too easy a prey—to the inconsequent and empty enthusiast; and it was his ruin.

* * * * *

Mr. Clutterbuck was back at The Plâs, and the thorn in his soul struck sore. Too many words were enigmas. He suffered too much silence. He would speak.

They were together in the Art Gallery of The Plâs, Mr. Clutterbuck and Charlie, the Master and the Man.

Mr. Clutterbuck was sitting at a desk where he often did his work, under the inspiration of the big Manet which Charlie had purchased that summer

of Raphael and Heinz. Fitzgerald was smoking a cigarette lazily at the end of the long room, and reading one of those articles in the *Spectator* which have so profound an influence week by week upon the political situation.

Mr. Clutterbuck suddenly looked up from his writing, turned round to him and said :

"Mr. Fitzgerald, what is a Peabody Yid ?"

Charlie Fitzgerald was so startled that he let the premier review of the Anglo-Saxon Race fall to the floor ; but a glance at Mr. Clutterbuck's honest though troubled profile reassured him.

"Oh, a Yid," he said laughing, "I suppose a Yid's a name for a German, or something of that sort. Then Peabody—oh, the Peabody Buildings !"

"Is it a kind of man, then ?" said Mr. Clutterbuck, solemnly.

"Why," said Fitzgerald, thoughtfully, "I suppose it is."

"I thought it was one man," said Mr. Clutterbuck, still in doubt, and in a tone which made Charlie Fitzgerald look at him again, but again feel reassured.

"It would be one fellow, of course," said Fitzgerald manfully, "if you were only speaking of one: if you said 'a Peabody Yid,' for instance . . . But if you were talking of several." he mused, "why you'd say 'Peabody Yids,' I s'pose. What ?"

Mr. Clutterbuck was lost in thought. "But Yid means a Jew surely, doesn't it, Mr. Fitzgerald?" said the older man. "It's a vulgar name for a Jew, isn't it?"

"Why-y, yes," answered the other with nonchalance. "A German, or a Jew, or something of that sort. Then Peabody was a sort of philanthropical fellow: architect, I think."

Mr. Clutterbuck having got so far, said: "Oh!" He said no more; he went on writing; but, like the man in the Saga, his heart was ill at ease. For the first time in many months he was as sore and as anxious as ever he had been in the old days before good fortune came to him.

The seventh day of the New Year broke brightly, but never a word from Peter Street. Mr. Clutterbuck went so far as to speak first to his secretary, before his secretary had spoken to him, and to ask him, but with all the courtesy imaginable, whether something could not be done to reassure him?

Charlie Fitzgerald more than hinted that it was all nervousness. "Things aren't done in that way," he said worriedly. "They won't give me anything in writing, of course."

Mr. Clutterbuck foresaw yet another futile verbal message and he came as near to anger as such a man can come at all. He was quite

evidently put out and annoyed. He went so far as to say :

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I did hope you would have done something for me."

And Charlie, who had a fine sense which told him when he had gone too far, got up and put a gentle hand on his employer's arm.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Clutterbuck," he said in a tone of low and grave sincerity, "I'm afraid you misunderstood me. I can't do more than find out, but I'll find out in more detail, and you must give me two days."

"Of course," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "of course ; you know what you have to do, Mr. Fitzgerald, I won't expect you back until I hear." But he added in a sort of appealing voice : "But do do something ! You see . . . it touches a man's pride, and . . . to be perfectly frank . . . Mrs. Clutterbuck doesn't like it. One feels odd when one's friends come."

The poor old gentleman was perfectly straightforward and it went to Charlie Fitzgerald's heart. Nevertheless a telegram which came for him a few hours later, after he had sent a telephone message to London, detained him yet another day. He fully explained to Mr. Clutterbuck the nature of the delay : the person whom he had expected to meet in town would not be back till the evening of the

9th ; but Mr. Clutterbuck was only partially relieved and he announced his intention of seeing to some business in the City. The business—alas ! that I should have to admit duplicity in such a character—was an interview with Mr. William Bailey.

That eccentric had at least opened him one door of sympathy, and in Mr. Clutterbuck's distress the business man's natural mistrust of uncertain and fantastic characters was forgotten.

He found Mr. Bailey occupying his worse than useless leisure in drawing up an enormous list of names, and by the side of each, in a second column, a second name was appended. He was so engrossed upon this task, in the prosecution of which he was surrounded by twenty or a dozen books of reference, collections of newspaper cuttings and memoranda of every sort, that he did not so much as look up when Zachary announced Mr. Clutterbuck, but went on murmuring :

" Beaufort——Rosenberg, date uncertain ;

" Belvedere——Cohen, 1873 ;

" Belmont——Schoenberg, 1882 (probably) . . .'

He had go so far when he jumped up, remembered his manners, and begged Mr. Clutterbuck to excuse his absorption.

" I was making out a list of people," he said, " a sort of dictionary."

"Are you going to publish it?" asked Mr. Clutterbuck politely, by way of beginning the conversation.

"Well," said Mr. Bailey, "I rather think I am. I dare say I should have to get it printed abroad, but that's no drawback."

"I hope it's all right," said Mr. Clutterbuck in alarm.

"Oh yes, it's quite moral," said Mr. Bailey airily. "But one often has to get things done abroad. Would you like to look at some of it?"

Mr. Clutterbuck had the courtesy to glance at the yards of double names and dates, but they meant nothing to him. He asked which column one read first, and William Bailey could only find the stupid and would-be enigmatic reply that some read it one way and some read it the other.

"Beaufort equals Rosenberg, or Rosenberg equals Beaufort: it's all the same thing. It's usually French on the left and German on the right," he said quizzically, putting his head on one side. "Middle Ages there, Modern Ages here," he went on, wagging his head symbolically right and left; and then suddenly broke out: "What've you come to see me about? Still hanging fire?"

Mr. Clutterbuck admitted that it was, and Mr. Bailey surveyed him with great kindness. It was evident the crank had no desire to eat up this

particular millionaire; he would give *him* a certificate of pure blood. He smiled at his sister's new acquaintance with deep benediction and at last he said in a knowing tone:

"Look here, Mr. Clutterbuck, I think I can only do *one* thing for you, but it's a very useful thing. It's just a rule of thumb, and I'm afraid you'll think it something in the dark; but it's no good making any more of it just now than a plain rule of thumb. It's just a plain rule of thumb."

Mr. Clutterbuck groaned inwardly. He was in the fog again. But William Bailey went on quite composed:

"I know a good deal of things," he said, stretching his arms and yawning as he said it.

"Yes, Mr. Bailey, certainly," said Mr. Clutterbuck fervently.

"Well then, if I just tell you a simple little dodge —don't think it too simple—just take it as a tip from me, and I'll see you through. I mean what I say. I don't think I'd do it for anybody else. TRY THE ANAPOOTRA RUBY MINES."

CHAPTER XI

THE name of the Anapootra Ruby Mines—that name of power—left Mr. Clutterbuck as blank as ever.

It couldn't be a medicine by the name of it, and if it was an investment, he hadn't come for any advice of *that* sort. He thought he knew his way about *there*.

"I don't understand what you mean," he said a little bluntly, for of late his courage had increased with his worries.

"Why," said Mr. Bailey, as though it were the simplest thing in the world, "the Anapootra *Ruby* Mines. Talk about 'em. Say you're interested in 'em. It'll work marvels."

Mr. Clutterbuck was almost in despair.

"If that's all you got to tell me," he said——

William Bailey put a hand on his shoulder. "Now there you are," he said, "that's just what I was afraid of. I give you a tip—it isn't a tip I'd give anybody else, and it's the very best tip I could give you. And because you don't see *why* it's a good tip, you're going to reject it."

"No I'm not, Mr. Bailey, really I'm not," said the unfortunate Clutterbuck. "But I don't understand —upon my word I don't understand."

"What's there to understand?" asked William Bailey. "There are the Anapootra Ruby Mines, and you just talk about them; that's easy enough. You bring them up at dinner; you add a postscript when you write a letter: 'By the way, have you heard about the Anapootra Ruby Mines?' Or you open a paper and say to the company: 'It's funny, but I don't see anything about the Anapootra Ruby Mines to-day.' You mayn't see *why* it will work wonders, but it will. By the way, have you ever seen the name in a paper?"

"I seem to have seen it somewhere," said Mr. Clutterbuck, not liking to confess his ignorance.

"Well, you haven't," replied William Bailey rudely. "You may bet your hat on that. If they'd been in the papers, there'd be nothing to talk about. But *you* talk about them long enough, and they'll get in the papers all right."

"But I don't see the connection," quavered Mr. Clutterbuck.

"Well, there it is," said William Bailey sighing, "there's the tip. If you try it and let it work, it will do marvels; and then you'll see what I've done."

"But what are they?" persisted Mr. Clutterbuck.

"Oh, ruby mines!" almost shouted William Bailey.

"Yes, certainly, but where?"

"In Anapootra of course," said Bailey.

Mr. Clutterbuck rose to go with a joyless face.

"You come back to me when it begins to work, and I'll see you through," were the last words of William Bailey, and his guest heard them ringing in his ears as he went mournfully to the train.

In The Plâs that very evening he tried it on. They were at their lonely meal, all three, Charlie Fitzgerald, who inwardly wished he had got away, Mrs. Clutterbuck, and the master of the house. They dared not have friends under such a cloud. Mr. Clutterbuck said casually to Mrs. Clutterbuck:

"My dear, do you know anything of the Anapootra Ruby Mines?"

"No," said Mrs. Clutterbuck sharply, and at the same time in a manner that clearly showed she was bored. The City had always wearied her since her husband's success; she hardly thought it quite the thing to speak of it before Charlie Fitzgerald. As for that well-born youth, he remained quite silent and ate with singular rapidity the Mousseline Braganza à la Polignac which he had before him.

"Do you know anything about them?" said Mr. Clutterbuck undaunted, and turning to Charlie Fitzgerald.

His wife issued one of her commanding glances, but he avoided it.

"The—Anapootra—Ruby—Mines?" said Charlie Fitzgerald, hesitating between each syllable. "No, I don't. I know about the *Brah*mapootra: it's a river."

"Yes," said Mr. Clutterbuck, and this singularly unfruitful conversation ended.

But Charlie Fitzgerald wondered and wondered more deeply what on earth he was to do. His task had been difficult enough already; it was becoming impossible.

Next day he took his bag and was off, but he promised to be home before the end of the week, and he promised still more sincerely, in private to Mr. Clutterbuck, to do everything that could possibly be done, and if he failed, to form some further plan. He was careful not to use any of the cars—he had used them quite enough lately, and the weather was foul. He took the train in the common fashion and drove from Victoria straight to Barnett House. The telephone had prepared them for his visit, and the Duke of Battersea, always the kindest and the warmest of friends to the young men of his rank, took him affectionately into the inner room, and heard all he might have to say.

* * * * *

The Duke of Battersea, now well stricken in

years, was of that kind which age matures and perfects.

The bitter struggles of his youth when, in part a foreigner, ill acquained with our tongue and bewildered by many of our national customs, he had made his entry into English finance, had given him all the wisdom such trials convey, but they had left nothing of that bitterness too often bred in the souls of those who suffer. The failure of the Haymarket Bank would not indeed have checked so tenacious a character, but the undeserved obloquy which he suffered in the few years succeeding that misfortune, and during the period when it was falsely imagined that he had finally failed, might have put him out of touch with the national life and have given him a false and uncharitable estimate of the country of his adoption. So far from permitting any such acidity to warp his soul, Mr. Barnett (as he then was) had but the more faithfully gone forward in the path which destiny offered him, and he had reaped the reward which modern England never fails to give to those of her sons who have preserved, throughout all the vicissitudes of life, a true sense of proportion and a proper balance between material prosperity and the public service.

When he had been raised to the peerage as Lord Lambeth, a vigorous man of fifty years, not only was his public position assured, but that respect for

a firm character and a just maintenance of a man's own establishment in the world which should accompany such a position, was deeply founded in the mind of the general public.

The newspapers, through which the great mass of our fellow citizens obtain their information, mentioned him not only continually, but with invariable deference, and often with admiration. His efforts in the House of Lords in favour of Bosnian freedom, and in the particular case of Macchabee Czernwitz, had proclaimed just that disinterested enthusiasm which we love to see applied by our great men to foreign affairs ; while, nearer home, the Organ Grinders' Bill, for which he was mainly responsible, was a piece of practical legislation which had obtained general recognition upon both sides of either House.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that when the M'Korio Delta Development Company was taken over by the State, his connection with that gallant experiment in the building of Empire, earned him a permanent fame more valuable than any material reward. He had long ago severed all personal connection with the district, retaining only so many shares as permitted him to sit upon the Board, and it is no little tribute to this great Englishman to point out that after seventeen years, during which it had been impossible to pay a dividend, he was able

triumphantly to persuade a united public opinion and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to purchase the concession at par : more, he handed over intact to the Crown not only the delta of the M'Korio River, but Mubu Otowa and the malarial district to the south of Tschè.

It was shortly after this achievement, in the year 1910, that he consented—somewhat reluctantly—to an advance in honour and accepted the Dukedom of Battersea.

The lower rungs of the ladder he had been willing to mount ; but a natural reserve had forbidden him hitherto to accede to the most pressing entreaties from either Party. He had indeed kept aloof from party politics, and had subscribed to the funds of the two great organisations only because he thought it his duty to enable men poorer than himself to display their talents in the arena of Parliament and because he justly desired to preserve some power for righteousness with the Executive of the moment.

Even at this late hour, over seventy years of age, and prepared at any moment to answer the Great Summons, he would hardly have followed the advice of his friend the Prime Minister in accepting the honour proposed to him, had not the task been rendered sadly easier to him by one tragic accident: there was no longer an heir to his vast wealth and honourable name. The Master of Kendale (for such

was the name of the old Scottish place), the handsome, intelligent boy with the bourbon nose, the wealth of black curls, proud full lips, and brilliant eyes which had lent such life to so many reunions, the child of Lord Lambeth's old age, his Ben-jamin was no more. The young soldier had lost his off stirrup only the summer before while trotting his yeomen on parade before the royal visitors to the Potteries, and when he was picked up he was quite dead ; the neck was broken between the second and third cervical vertebræ.

For the old man the blow was terrible. Long widowed, all his hopes had centred upon this only child whom, though not yet of age, he had already begun to train in the great money which he was destined to inherit and control. For a moment he thought of giving up Barnett House—of resigning his affairs. At last he rallied, and the tragedy had this good in it for England, that it permitted him to accept the Dukedom, and perhaps also permitted him to continue, if only as a solace, that active interest in the wider commerce of the Empire wherein his talents were of such fruit and value to his country.

It was in connection with these that the Duke of Battersea had undertaken the management of those Anapootra Ruby Mines, the quiet transference of which to his able management had been the triumph

of the last vice royalty. Is it to be wondered at if Fitzgerald, fearing such interests were menaced, went to warn their chief protector?

He was brief and clear. The Ruby Mines were out. They must be well out or old Clutterbuck wouldn't have heard of them, and old Clutterbuck had.

No words of mine are needed to defend the commercial honour of the Duke of Battersea; still less need I waste a moment's effort in an apology for our great Civil Service. It needs men of a very different calibre from Mr. Bailey to throw doubt upon the absolute integrity of our Imperial system; and the last Lieutenant-Governor of Anapootra in particular, deservedly boasting a host of friends, intensely laborious, honourably poor, would have cause for complaint if even an eulogy of him, let alone a defence, were undertaken here. But in order to comprehend the foolish and treasonable agitation Mr. Bailey hoped to raise, it is necessary that I should put down plainly all the circumstances of the venture.

For many centuries the ruby mines of Anapootra had been worked as the property of that native State. And when the administration of the valley was taken over by Great Britain the exploitation of the mines very naturally followed. From April 1 of the year 1905 they had become, along

with certain other possessions of the State, a portion of the public domain.

The traditional methods by which their wealth had hitherto been exploited were wholly insufficient. A community of some hundreds of natives, working upon a complex, co-operative system, living in a miserable state of poverty and degradation, had paid, from immemorial time, a fixed percentage of their output to their Sovereign ; and the humanitarian faddism of Sir Charles Finchley—whose appointment was one of the few mistakes of Lord Curzon's viceroyalty—had permitted this system to endure during the first few years of our occupation. But it was obvious that so primitive an arrangement could not endure. In 1910 there was but one question before the new Lieutenant-Governor ; whether it would be more profitable to establish a direct exploitation of these mines by the Crown, or to concede that exploitation for a term of years to some company which, under expert advice and with long experience of the business, might secure a higher profit to the State. It was only after deep thought and the full consideration of every detail, that the Lieutenant-Governor decided upon the latter course and signed a concession to a private company for a term of fifteen years.

He further determined—and it was the act of a strong man—to avoid the disadvantages of public

competition with its accompaniment of ill-informed and often unpatriotic criticism, of questions in the House of Commons, and of all the paraphernalia of ignorance and cant.

He made the concession boldly to a company of his own choice, and though he was not particularly concerned with the persons involved so long as the company itself was in his opinion honest and efficient, he was none the less delighted to learn that so great a financier as the Duke of Battersea had guaranteed its position and security —nay, was himself, in his capacity of the Anglo-Moravian Bank, the principal shareholder in the new venture.

It is ill work excusing any man so talented and honest, so devoted to the public service, as the late Lieutenant-Governor of Anapootra, but the criticism to which he has been subjected makes that task necessary, however painful.

The concession signed was, upon the face of it, just such a document as political puritans at home, ignorant as they are of local conditions, would pounce upon in their desire to vent their ill-informed suspicion of their own countrymen. The rent to be paid by the company was but a quarter of that originally paid by the native workers, and less than a tenth of that which official estimates of the yield under modern methods had contemplated. More-

over, no rent was to be paid before 1915, the fourth year of the concession, and there were to be rebates in case the company should come upon weak pockets or the supply should fall below a certain level in the interval for which the concession was granted. Those of my readers who are acquainted with the details of finance will at once perceive that these advantages were no more than what was necessary to tempt a private venture and the risk of private capital. But if any *not* acquainted with large financial operations should have lingering doubts, it is enough to add that the Lieutenant-Governor of Anapootra had been so scrupulously careful of the public interest as to resign his post and to terminate a great pro-consular career in order to accept the directorship of the new company where he could overlook its action and check its contributions to the exchequer. He was determined that no sacrifice upon his part should be spared in his zeal for the public fortune.

He did more: he persuaded the chief Government expert upon the mines to throw up *his* secure place, the prospect of his pension—everything, and to take at a somewhat increased salary the position of Consulting Engineer to the new Company.

He did yet more. He, a man suffering from a grave internal disease,* underwent, in the height of

* Liver.

the hot season, the long journey to England in order to impress upon the Secretary of State * the prime importance of secrecy. He risked what was dearer than life to him—his very honour—for a venture which would ensure riches to England, and would bring enlightenment and modern progress to one far forgotten corner of the Indian world.

In a word, he left nothing undone which a sensitive and scrupulous gentleman should do to preserve the interests of his country, and in all this action he sought no fame, he permitted not a word to appear in the public Press; he went so far—it was quixotic upon his part—as to deny all rumours until the plan was complete. And though the fame of the Anapootra Valley has since widely increased through the lucrative operations of the new company, and the wide dispersion of its shares among the public, its former Lieutenant-Governor has to this day successfully prevented his name from being connected with the history of that great new asset in our commercial system.

Other nations have public servants perhaps better trained in a technical sense than are ours, but no nation can boast a body of men who will thus obscurely and without reward sacrifice themselves wholly in the public service and be content to remain unknown.

* Then (in 1911) Mr. Buffle.

There is the whole truth upon the Anapootra Ruby Mines.

The reader who has followed the plain narrative put before him will be able to judge between it and the monstrous assumption upon which Mr. Bailey was prepared to conduct, or at any rate to initiate, his mischievous agitation.

The rapidity with which that agitation developed was embarrassing, even to a man so used to immediate decisions as the Duke of Battersea. To the ex-Lieutenant-Governor, whom his long and faithful public service in the tropics had deprived of digestion and had rendered partially deaf, it was appalling.

It was upon Tuesday afternoon, January 8, 1912, that Mr. Bailey, looking up at the ceiling, had launched the fatal words. It was upon Tuesday evening that Mr. Clutterbuck had repeated them in the presence of Fitzgerald : thanks to the prompt and loyal action of that strong young Irish soul, the Duke knew of them before Wednesday noon.

Forewarned is forearmed :—the malignant plot was at last defeated—but at what a sacrifice of honest ambition and happy lives the reader must learn and curse the name of William Bailey.

* * * * *

Charlie Fitzgerald sat long with the aged Duke—though there was little to say. He received with deference and grateful willingness the suggestion to

be of service in a matter where written words were impossible. He made a note of whom he was to visit; how high he was to go in the event of some agency threatening to print the story of the Company; what he was to say to the editor by telephone, and what by letter to the Secretary of State. He proved that afternoon a second son to the old childless man, and when he had dined alone with him, and admired the new Rodin on the stairs, he went off to Scotland in the midnight sleeper to see the ex-Governor before the post should reach him. He was prepared to do all this and more for the Duke of Battersea, and the Duke was a grateful man.

* * * * *

The next morning's post was something of a trial to Mr. Clutterbuck in the absence of his secretary. He had learnt to depend upon that prop altogether, and at any other time he would have allowed all the letters which were not, by the handwriting, the letters of friends to accumulate unopened; but that day, January 10, 1912, that Thursday, he was too anxious to do any such thing. He opened one letter, then another; the third positively stupefied him. It was from his agent in Mickleton, and simply told him that a petition was to be lodged disputing the validity of his election. They had learnt the news upon the Wednesday evening.

Mr. Clutterbuck was an honest man.

The occasions on which it is possible to bring against a man of English lineage the grave accusation of tampering with political morals are very, very rare; still rarer, thank God, are the occasions on which such an accusation can be maintained.

In vain did Mr. Clutterbuck—all his energies on the strain as they used to be in the old days of commerce—minutely examine his experiences of the month before. He could not discover a word or a gesture of his or any act authorised by him, even indirectly, which could have led to so monstrous an accusation. His sense of honour felt the thing keenly, and the agent's letter trembled in the hand that held it. Then, like a clap of thunder, came the memory of the bag of sovereigns and the Bogey Man.

He had been assured and reassured that it was a common practice admitted in all elections: he knew, upon perfectly good evidence, that another Bogey Man had done the same ritual and necessary act for Lord Henfield. It was without a doubt a fixed custom in every election. The sum was small; it was a fair wage for honest work openly done. Nevertheless the memory of the actual metal weighed intolerably upon Mr. Clutterbuck's ill ease.

That had done it! The only other source he

could think of was his wife, and he knew her too well to suspect her of any foolish and ill-considered act of charity which might have compromised his chances.

As for the half-sovereign, the wicked little half-sovereign, his lawyer had completely satisfied him. The return of it cleared him wholly. No! It was the Bogey Man, and there was no help for it.

He went in at once to see Mr. Bailey. He forgot to telephone: he was in an agony lest that one friend and stay should be out. But there he found him again, still at his international list, which had now got as far as the "M's," "Montague—Samuel, 1883 (Gladstone)."

This time he did not forget his manners. He met the merchant with great sympathy, and looking at him a little critically, said with good cheer:

"It's begun to work, you see!" He had seen about the petition in the papers.

Mr. Clutterbuck did not even hope to understand. "Oh, Mr. Bailey," he said. "Mr. Bailey, what on earth am I to do?"

To this Mr. Bailey returned the irrelevant reply: "Go on talking about the Anapootra Ruby Mines!" as though that action were a sort of panacea for the disturbed heart of man. It was bitter mockery in the ear of one whose greatest hopes were thus dashed at the end of a long and honourable life.

"I had expected more from you, Mr. Bailey," said Mr. Clutterbuck gravely.

William Bailey was again touched.

"I mean it, Clutterbuck," he said; "I really mean it. All medicines are bitter at first; it's a big business, but it's the right way—I do assure you it's the right way. I suppose you've written about those Ruby Mines—postscripts, eh? A few cards I hope? A word or two to friends in the train? Mentioned them to the servants? They're very useful, servants are! Oh, and by the way, I ought to have told you—the parson. Parsons are splendid; so are doctors. But you can't have done them all yet."

"Mr. Bailey," said Mr. Clutterbuck solemnly, "I haven't opened my lips in the matter; at least," he added, correcting himself, "only to my wife at dinner."

"And Charlie 'Fitzgerald' was there no doubt. My Cousin Charlie?" asked William Bailey pleasantly. "I've just got past him on my list—at least not him, but his grandfather. 'Daniels—Fitzgerald 1838.' Jolly old man his grandfather, but a little greasy—I remember him. He was called Daniels—Daniel Daniels; son of old Moss Daniels, the Dublin sheeny, that came to people's help, you know; you ought to know about the Daniels; very old family; we used to call his wife's drawing-room the lions' den. She was my aunt,

you know," he added cheerfully. "Cousin of mine, is Charlie."

"Oh, but Mr. Bailey," groaned Mr. Clutterbuck, leaving all these irrelevancies aside, "what *am* I to do?"

"Oh, let 'em have it," said William Bailey in the serenity of his dissociation from politics and every other vanity.

"Let 'em unseat me!" shrieked Mr. Clutterbuck.

"You can't help it," said Mr. Bailey, "eh?"

"But they can't prove anything," said his guest. He was excited and defiant "There's nothing to prove!"

"Oh, come," said Mr. Bailey, "come Mr. Clutterbuck. Don't go on like that. If they're going to unseat you, they're going to unseat you. And what's being unseated? Old Buffle was unseated three times."

"I should die of it!" said Mr. Clutterbuck with a groan.

"No you won't," said Mr. Bailey. "The Lord shall make your enemies your footstool; or, at any rate, His agent on earth will give you a good day's sport with them. Meanwhile you go on with those Ruby Mines. And, wait a minute, there's something to do to keep your mind off it meanwhile: there's a good agency in Fetter Lane; they have a lot of first-rate men. I remember a man called

Bevan who did some very good work for an enemy of mine a little time ago. Go and give them a tenner and get them to find out who was behind that petition ; though I think I know already. I'll come with you."

* * * * *

The two men went eastward together, Mr. Bailey talking of a thousand improbable things on the way, and they laid the task before the very courteous manager, who assured them it would be the simplest thing in the world. And so it was, for they learnt the same evening that though the petition had been lodged by a large grocer of the name of Hewlett in Mafeking Avenue, the real mover in the affair was a workman resident in a small street off the Crescent, a casual labourer of the name of Seale.

"That's all right," said Mr. Bailey when the news came to them as they sat at dinner together. "You won't find out that way. They been got at. That's a tenner wasted," he added anxiously, "but I'll pay it—I gave the advice. You go back home, and I'll let you know everything I hear within two days."

And Mr. Clutterbuck went home a little, but only a little, comforted ; feeling that he had indeed one ally—but what an ally ! A man who talked in enigmas, a *dilettante* with wild theories in which he himself only half believed ; a man half ostracised, half tolerated, and wholly despised, but a man in the

swim, anyhow: the memory of that consoled Mr. Clutterbuck.

Two days afterwards Charlie Fitzgerald returned. His story was perfectly concise, too concise, alas, for that stricken household. He did not bother them with his visit to the Duke of Battersea and to Scotland—he spoke only of their own business. He had seen Peter Street yet once again. They were sorry, but it had happened from having too many names on the list; some had to wait; they admitted they had postponed Mr. Clutterbuck's name to Paardeberg Day, when there was a batch of thirty to bring out.

"But now there's the Petition," said Charlie Fitzgerald a little awkwardly; "you see under the circumstances——"

"I see," said Mr. Clutterbuck with a grim face.

"Don't take it like that," said Charlie Fitzgerald, "they can't prove anything. It's only a bit of spite."

"That's what I was saying to-day," said Mr. Clutterbuck. And the Anapootra Ruby Mines were forgotten—but Mr. Bailey had not forgotten them!

The horror of the Member—of the still Member for Mickleton, of the Member for Mickleton in the National Party interest—was as deep as hell when he received by post a marked copy of a low Socialist

rag, whose name he barely knew, and there under the title "What We Don't Hear," was a jeering allusion to the Anapootra mines, coupled with a laudatory account of himself as the champion of popular rights. Next day a severe but obscure rebuke connecting his name with an unworthy piece of demagogy appeared in the *Standard*. A little later a fine defence of his courage was included in a letter to the *Guardian*. Mr. Clutterbuck was in terror of the unknown, and everywhere the dreadful sound of Anapootra haunted him. He walked over the Downs to clear his brain; he sat down in the little inn at Ragman's Corner, where they always gave him a private room and treated him as the chief gentleman of their neighbourhood. He had hardly tasted his glass of sherry when the publican said to him with cheerful respect:

"Well, sir, I see you've started another hare, and I wish you luck, sir. Here's to the People!"

Mr. Clutterbuck turned pale; but when the publican had finished his glass and wiped his mouth with his finger, he did not fail to add:

"Here's to you, sir, and the Putrid Ruby Mines, whatever they may be, and good luck to the lot!"

Oh the agony of an isolated man! Oh, passion of humanity, when it can find no fellow on whom to repose! The violent agitation of youth returned

to his aged blood as he went home in the dark January evening, and he almost feared that the belated peasants whom he met so rarely as he hurried home, would each of them whisper as they passed the hateful name of Anapootra; that some evil shape would start from the darkness and scream it in his ear.

For a day or two the agony endured. Visitors and guests, the parson in his weekly visit, the doctor who had come to advise him upon the nature of his port, all in varied tones slyly or gravely, or with astonishment or casually, all brought in the Accursed Thing.

The *Times*—and he loved them for it—had not printed a word; but the *Spectator*, keen and breezy as it is, and abreast of every new interest in English life, had published an honourable protest; the editor was sure that a man who was in the forefront of the heroes who had redeemed the Congo would not sully his name by a disreputable agitation against his fellow countrymen; while, in another sphere, the *Winning Post*, as he knew by a secret peep taken at the bookstall, positively had a cartoon of a vague ghastly thing labelled "The Anapootra Ruby Mines," and a little figure, undoubtedly himself, supporting it with difficulty in the face of a violent gale.

Then after a few days his mood gradually changed.

Mr. Clutterbuck began to take a secret pride in his connection with these Gemmiferous Caves of the Orient. There was no doubt at all that for the second time in two months he was a public man; a martyr perhaps in a public cause. Greatness began to apparel him, and side by side with the case of Rex *v.* Fishmonger and Another, which he understood in a certain fashion, the Anapootra Ruby Mines—still a complete mystery to him—supported his growing fame.

One inept Radical sheet went so far as to suggest that he was the cat's-paw of the wicked men who had perpetrated that fraud upon their country, but the greater part, especially of the Democratic press, nobly maintained his integrity, and said they would see him through to the end.

His new publicity consoled him a crumb, a mere crumb, in the prospect of the dreadful days before him. He sometimes indulged the inward hope that no evidence could unseat a man now so deservedly the darling of a Public cause; in the intervals when this consolation failed him, he fell back upon the memory of his integrity and unblemished if short public life; he had assured and reassured himself as to the Bogey Man, and he was at last at ease upon the bag of gold. The consciousness of his innocence outweighed the gloomy prophecies of William Bailey, and as the days passed the memory of that gentle-

man's forecast grew paler and faded away. But the passage of the days brought with it also the time of the election petition; there was a week, five days—four. On the last Monday he sat for an hour or two with Charlie—who was of course to give evidence—they considered every aspect, and could see no loophole for attack. On the morrow they went into Mickleton together, and as they passed at speed through the streets of the borough they seemed to him too silent; even the police he thought—it may have been but fancy—but even the police, he could have sworn, were colder and more formal than of yore.

CHAPTER XII

THE court in which the Mickleton election petition was to be heard sat in the Town Hall of that borough, and the first day, Tuesday, was occupied in formalities, but even so the end of the great room set aside for the public was crowded.

The main part of the business was taken the next morning, the proceedings were short—and they proved decisive. After a few unimportant witnesses had been called—their testimony was very inconclusive—Mr. Stephens was heard. To the member's intense relief not a word passed upon the Bogey Man, not a word upon the bag of sovereigns, for the inquiry was conducted with honour, and the conventions of our elections were allowed. When Mr. Clutterbuck heard that his own secretary was to be examined, he could not but feel confident in the result, but the spectacle of one whom he trusted and who was his right hand throughout the struggle being used by the lawyers against himself, was a thing Mr. Clutterbuck very properly resented. He silenced

his anger by remembering that justice will have its course.

Charlie Fitzgerald gave his evidence in that simple, direct way which should be a model for us all; he answered every question in few words, neither embellishing nor concealing anything. He admitted the very considerable influence of the Fishmonger Relief Committee, and was proceeding to estimate the ten or twelve thousand it had spent for his employer, when Sir John Compton at once interfered and ruled the evidence out. It had been clearly laid down in three precedents that an independent organisation was free to spend what sums it saw fit so long as those funds did not proceed from the pocket of the candidate or his agent.

The thing seemed settled and Mr. Clutterbuck was breathing again towards the close of that day, when counsel in a tone ominously calm, said shortly:

"Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, will you tell us where you were between half past nine and midnight, of Monday the 6th of November of last year?"

Mr. Fitzgerald remembered the hour and day and all the events with truly remarkable accuracy. He said with perfect frankness that he had spent the evening going in a cab from the Curzon Arms to the Mother Bunch; from the Mother Bunch to the Harvest Home; from the

Harvest Home to the Drovers, from the Drovers to the Naked Man ; from the Naked Man to the Adam and Eve ; and from the Adam and Eve to the Prince of Wales's Feathers ; he could not be absolutely certain of the order but it was more or less as he had stated it.

Those in court who did not understand the nature of the confession began to smile, but in a few moments they saw the drift of the examination when counsel put this perfectly plain demand :

"Mr. Fitzgerald, think carefully : did you or did you not offer a glass of whiskey in the Prince of Wales's Feathers to one Alfred Arthur Pound ?"

"I offered a glass of whiskey to him and to several gentlemen," said Charlie Fitzgerald openly.

"You offered whiskey to these electors, Mr. Fitzgerald ?" said counsel.

"I couldn't see," began Charlie Fitzgerald.

But the Bench at once interrupted. "You are not here, witness, to tell us what you saw or what you did not see. You are here to give us your evidence."

And Charlie Fitzgerald was silent. He was asked further questions. He had given whiskey to various citizens at the Curzon Arms, at the Naked Man, at the Adam and Eve, and in fact at every public-house but one upon the whole of that night. And of the men who could be traced, every one of whom gave

evidence upon oath in rapid succession, no less than 72·6 per cent. possessed votes in the constituency.

The finding of the commission was very brief; it could not be otherwise after what they had heard. They emphasised in the strongest possible manner Mr. Clutterbuck's own innocence in the affair. The Bench affirmed in the most flattering and emphatic terms that a more honourable man than Mr. Clutterbuck had not appeared in the arena of our public life.

Fitzgerald also, in spite of what had proved a lamentable imprudence, was heartily and gladly exonerated of any attempt to corrupt that high standard of purity which is the glory of our public life. Sir John Compton was careful to add that no shadow of suspicion rested on Mr. Stephens; he was willing to exonerate Alfred Arthur Pound. But there was no choice offered to a reasonable man, before whom the facts had been presented; though most certainly no one had intended corruption or pressure in any form—*that*, he hoped, was absent from our public life—yet it was plain that within three weeks of the poll a large number of electors had received a benefit especially defined by statute as illegal and had received it at the hands of one virtually acting (though of course in complete innocence of any unworthy motive) for the gentleman who was candidate for the borough.

Even had there been no such statute or definition, the conclusion was plain, and it was their very painful but solemn duty to declare, in accordance with the evidence they had heard—evidence Sir John Compton was careful to point out, which no one had attempted to rebut, and which he, for his part, had very fully believed, that the election was invalid.

Mr. Clutterbuck jumped up wildly:

"Oh my Lord!" he said.

But his counsel pulled him sharply by the coat tail, tearing in so doing, I am sorry to say, the seam by which that appendage is sometimes attached to the upper part of the garment; while Mr. Justice Paisley, who had hitherto been silent, sternly ordered him to be seated.

Once again within six months the Borough of Mickleton was widowed of its proud share in the administration of our land.

Whether it would or would not be disfranchised for a period of years was a matter which little concerned the unhappy man upon whom the blow had fallen. He walked distractedly away at such a pace that it was some hundred yards before Fitzgerald had caught him up and attempted to quiet his perturbation. To his first mood of despair was rapidly being added a second mood of anger and outraged justice, but he was honourable enough not

to lay to the poor young man's account the terrible misfortune that had befallen himself. He did not forget all that Fitzgerald had done for him during the critical days of the election, and he was grateful even now for the many services rendered by one without whom his first and ephemeral success would never have been won.

Nevertheless he insisted, as the reader may well imagine, in seeking some relief in the company of William Bailey, and Charlie, after a moment's hesitation, was too wise to dissuade him.

He left his employer at the door in Bruton Street, with an appointment to meet later in the evening, and the broken man was ushered by Zachary into that familiar room, where he waited in a dull agony for his mentor's return.

It was a full half-hour before William Bailey came in. He had been hurriedly told in the hall what visitor he had. He had not troubled to look at the tape at his Club; he was pretty certain of the result, and there was a sort of I-told-you-so look on his face as he greeted Mr. Clutterbuck, which did little to raise that gentleman's spirits.

It was a foolish thing to ask, but Mr. Clutterbuck did ask William Bailey what he was to do.

William Bailey answered without hesitation that he could do nothing. "Unless indeed," he added, "you care to act and to lead from outside; you

can still do that. One good meeting by an unseated member can do more against a Government than a dozen questions in the House. D'you care to try? It's risky, you know . . . They'll put the whole thing into court and muzzle you; and you'll have to speak before Parliament opens also, because on the first day it'll be called out of order unless there's a really *strong* press outside."

Mr. Clutterbuck was in a mood for anything. What he was to do, or why, was quite beyond him; but there was to be a meeting and it would hurt those who had hurt him: so much he saw.

"Other men have done it," said William Bailey, citing examples from a less orderly past, "and you can do it if you like."

"I'm willing enough," said Mr. Clutterbuck, setting his teeth. "You mean," he added, brilliantly concealing his ignorance; "you mean, I'm to go on about the mines?"

"That's it," said William Bailey.

"Well," said Mr. Clutterbuck, his head sinking upon his shoulders again, "you'll have to do it, Mr. Bailey. I can't see or think or plan; and I don't know what the Anapootra can do for me or any one, supposing I did——"

"Oh, nonsense," said Mr. Bailey briskly, "a man must do what he can; you can't get your seat

again by main force. You can't get the other things you want right off the shelf by helping yourself. You must go on pressing and pressing. It's the only way—it's the one way in which anything gets done. Besides which, it's enough to make any man——"

"You're right there," said Mr. Clutterbuck eagerly; "it's enough to make any man take action. What will you do, Mr. Bailey?"

Mr. Bailey, when he had to form a rapid plan, gave a sort of false impression of rapidity and strength which had deceived many. He mapped out all the dates.

"You know the Directors are going for libel against the *Courier?*" he said.

Mr. Clutterbuck didn't know it.

"Well, but they are. To-day's Wednesday, and it will be before the courts to-day week, next Wednesday," he said. "Once it's before the courts you'll go to choke if you speak about it; so will any other Johnny except in Parliament; besides which, Parliament meets the same day, and what's more, I'm not at all sure they'd allow it even in Questions, and there won't be any Questions until Wednesday, and by that time, as I say, unless we get steam up outside it'll be out of order. Monday's no good, you can't get people on Monday. It'll take a day to get the posters up, and the advertisements and to

dry them. We'll say Saturday—Saturday at eight, in the Jubilee Hall."

"What for?" said his slower minded companion.

"For the meeting of course," said Mr. Bailey in surprise; "for the great meeting of protest by the ex-Member from Mickleton, on the Anapootra Ruby Mines!"

For all Mr. Clutterbuck's determination he was somewhat appalled. "I'm not at all sure that I should speak, well I—I don't know even what or who . . ." he began slowly.

"Oh that's all right," cut in William Bailey eager for the fray. "I'll write your speech out, and I'll introduce you on the platform. It's the *name* we want, and your power in the constituency. They know *that*. The papers won't dare boycott it, and you'll get the horny-handed in thousands. We'll have a grand time!"

He said it with the irresponsibility of a boy, but that mood is dangerous in a man.

So was it decided that on the next Saturday, before Parliament opened, and before the matter was, to be classical, *sub-judice*, a great meeting should be held and the ball set rolling by Mr. Clutterbuck, Champion of the People; but the Champion was torn between fear and desire.

Mr. Clutterbuck when he reached the Plâs,

was careful to keep the meeting even from his wife. He told it to none but Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was sympathetic and it felt like old times.

Meanwhile, in London, Mr. Bailey had hired the Jubilee Hall, and, if it were necessary for overflow, the Coronation Annex.

The next day he spent some hours with Mr. Clutterbuck, drilling his speech into him with unwearied repetition; and Charlie Fitzgerald, having nothing better to do, called on his dear old friend the Duke of Battersea, and passed with him a most delightful afternoon. Mr. Clutterbuck and Fitzgerald met at Victoria. The merchant and his secretary went home together. And that same evening the Duke of Battersea did what he had to do.

A telephone message to the Prime Minister's house and the assurance of a hearty welcome, made what he had to do easier for him. He found that statesman, still spirited and young in spite of his increasing trouble with the left lung, crouched over the fire, spreading his hands to the blaze. He talked to him of various things: of the session that was about to open, of the plague in Burmah, of Mrs. Kempton's latest book. He said a few words about Mr. Bailey, and casually mentioned the step which that gentleman was apparently about to take.

For a man in such doubtful health (and for one before whom such arduous duties immediately lay) the Prime Minister was quite vivacious in his replies. He differed from the Duke of Battersea with regard to Mrs. Kempton's latest book, and criticised her attitude towards Malthus. He spoke cheerfully of the coming session though he joked a little about the smallness of the majority; he was very grave indeed about the plague in Burmah—and he said nothing at all about Mr. Bailey.

The Duke of Battersea remained not more than twenty minutes. It was his interest to show his sympathy with the Prime Minister's illness rather han to detain him in conversation, and he could understand that the amusing story of Mr. Bailey's fanatical outburst would be touched on lightly or passed in silence by a man who sat in the same Cabinet with Lord Burpham; for after all, Lord Burpham's son, since the Duchess of Drayton's second marriage was stepfather to the girl whom William Bailey's favourite nephew had recently married, and relations of this kind, when they occur in the political life of our democracy, are naturally sacred. For all the shortness of his visit, the Duke of Battersea had learnt what he wanted to know. He did not depend upon the Prime Minister's aid. He re-entered his car with an alternative scheme clear

before him, and when he reached home he began to carry it into effect.

In the midst of the room where the Philanthropist and Financier habitually worked, was a large table which had formerly been the property of the Cardinal de Rohan ; it had passed into other hands during the misfortunes of the Reinachs * some twenty odd years before. Its broad surface supported but a few simple and necessary things : two tall Georgian candlesticks of silver plate, now fitted with electric lamps ; a great ink-pot, and by the side of it an electric bell.

The Duke of Battersea spread out a large sheet of paper upon the table before him, made a few notes, re-arranged certain details, was satisfied with his plan, and next, without looking up, stretched forth his hand to touch the electric bell. He was old and some of his movements uncertain. His finger had the misfortune to find not the electric bell but the ink-pot, into which it deeply plunged. A lesser man would have been disturbed at the accident, and a coarser one might have been moved to suck the injured limb. The Duke of Battersea showed no such weakness. He looked up, rubbed his finger

* I do not allude to M. de Reinach, the great French statesman and champion of Truth and Justice, but to his uncle, whose sudden demise will be familiar to many.

on the blotting-pad, made sure of the electric bell, and when it was answered, said in a low voice:

"Mr. Befan."

The servant disappeared, and came back in half an hour with the message :

"Mr. Bevan is not at the Agency, your grace; he is watching the Hampton divorce case, your grace. The Agency says, your grace, will you have Penderton ?"

"Certainly not," said the Duke of Battersea, still intent upon the paper before him. "Find out when he will be back."

In a quarter of an hour he was told that the detective was expected home from Hertfordshire at half-past twelve that night.

The duke looked at his watch, compared it with a fine specimen of Toledo clockwork set in a German monstrance upon the mantelpiece, and saw that he had an hour to wait. He made a motion with his hand and was left alone. He was determined to see Bevan and to see him that night, but it was nearly one in the morning before the door opened and the detective appeared.

The detective was a short gentlemanly man with a hare lip and a malformation of the forehead which raised one eyebrow considerably above the other. He did not limp, but when he walked the emphasis was upon the right leg. His ears which

were large and prominent did much to counterbalance the pleasing intelligence of his expression. He was not a man whom one would at the first sight, nor at the second, have chosen for the unravelling of difficult problems, but the Duke of Battersea knew far too much of the world to judge by any other standard than that of performance and of practice. And Mr. Bevan had not failed him on two recent occasions when rapid execution had been essential, as it was essential now.

He wasted no words. He described who had to be watched and what evidence if possible had to be gathered. He gave the address in Bruton Street, and as the detective stood respectfully at the door, he named a hundred pounds.

"It's worth a hundred and fifty, your grace," said Mr. Bevan, as he repeated the conditions which were laid down to him.

"Sefen and six-pence," said the Duke with a gentle smile, "if what I have told you already was all indeed"—and having said that he gave time for it to soak in.

Mr. Bevan changed his hat from one hand to the other, then held it in both hands and said he was sure he didn't mean to say more than one should say, and he would certainly leave it to the Duke, who nodded and answered him:

"That is good—that is right. For this reason I

make it a hundred ; and if he does nothing as you want, you shall see him do, and you shall be a witness."

"I can't make a man do anything worth telling you, my lord," said Mr. Bevan rather surlily.

"Why, then," said the Duke of Battersea, approaching his wrists and opening his hands widely outwards, "how can I either pay ?"

Mr. Bevan sighed unpleasantly and was content.

He left the Presence before two o'clock, but such was his intimacy with more than one of the servants that it was half-past two in the morning before he was clear of Barnett House. He did not wait for the tardy advent of the winter dawn ; he was home before three ; he then and there put on his professional boots, to the soles of which were attached small pads of india-rubber. He secreted upon his person a small revolver, a yet smaller electric lantern, £5 in change in case the hunt should take him far afield, a flask of Scotch whiskey, a box of fusees, some cigarettes such as are smoked by the landed classes, two good cigars, five cheap ones, a little Craven mixture in one side of his tobacco pouch and some peculiarly vile shag in the other. He put on a waistcoat within the lining of which his true name and address were inscribed upon a linen pad, thrust into his breast pocket an envelope bearing a false name and address, and put into a

visiting card case certain visiting cards bearing yet a third name and address, that of one Hilling, a commercial traveller in the Seven Sisters Road; others inscribed Mr. John Hilling, Captain 47th Fusiliers, Rochester, he also secreted in various pockets, and a few more in which the same name was played upon in other ways.

The reader will be surprised to hear that after these preparations he put upon his head a billycock hat of the most demonstrative type, and committed the imprudence of wearing a large, made-up blue tie. But genius, however universal, however disciplined and experienced, is human. It is easy to criticise a fault in detail; it is more difficult to reproduce the general plan of the master; and those who may be disposed to ridicule the large made-up tie of Mr. Bevan, or the billycock hat which I have gone so far as to call demonstrative, would do well to ask themselves whether they would have had the learning or the intuition to provide themselves—I mention but one point—with cigarettes such as are smoked by the landed gentry, with Craven mixture upon one side of the tobacco pouch and with a peculiarly vile shag upon the other; yet Mr. Bevan had thought of these things!

A few glasses of hot whiskey and water to prepare him for the ordeal were rapidly swallowed—for Mr. Bevan, like most men of acute intelligence, was a

moderate drinker—and he went out into the night. It was a little after four o'clock.

A man of less experience in the ways of the world might have neglected to observe the movements of so wealthy a personage as Mr. Bailey until a later hour in the morning, so universal has the deplorable habit of late rising become among the governing classes of this country. Mr. Bevan knew better. He had seen many a dark deed done between five and seven of a London January morning, nay, in the old days as a member of the Force he could well remember routing out the Alsatians close upon six o'clock, though to be sure on that occasion the Force had been guided to those abandoned premises by the sound of boisterous music and the firing of a rocket through one of the upper windows.

It was not five, then, when Mr. Bevan took his stand opposite the little house in Bruton Street. He had chosen his advantage very well. With a courage and skill which only those who have served in the Metropolitan Police can understand, he hid himself in a corner where a shadow thrown by a buttress put him in complete darkness. He was a short man and yet had to crouch a little, but he was used to discomfort in the prosecution of his duty, and in this attitude, unable even to smoke for fear the light should betray him, he watched for over an hour. At the end of that time rain began

to fall. He did not upon that account abandon his post; the tardy winter dawn gleamed at last over the shining roofs of London. With the first hint of daylight the light on his collar, which he had neglected to cover, betrayed him to a policeman of the name of Tooley, who was slowly pacing the street and whistling a mournful air.

As quick as lightning Mr. Bevan was grabbed by both elbows, his face thrust against the rough brick-work, and a natural demand, brief and perhaps somewhat too violent, as to his occupation and intentions was addressed to him by that Civil Servant. To the policeman's astonishment Mr. Bevan's only reply to these manœuvres was what is technically known in the Force as "the shake," and retreating rapidly three steps backward he had the presence of mind to say in a low tone, "I'll pass the order."

With these words he satisfied his colleague in the manner which is usual with our efficient and highly trained body of public guardians, of the nature and legitimacy of his mission. The respective positions of the Duke of Battersea and of Mr. Bailey were quite enough to convince a sober judgment, and policeman Tooley, an active and intelligent man, at once appreciated the situation, but felt bound in duty to add :

"I must keep my eye on you, mind," to which

Mr. Bevan cheerfully replied by a nod of the head, and resumed his former post.

At about half-past seven the rain ceased. Eight o'clock struck: no one in the street was stirring. A milkman passed down on foot, leaving his little can at every gate, but carefully refraining from uttering that musical cry, which the upper classes have, very properly, forbidden in the neighbourhood of their town residences. It was a quarter to nine and the whiskey in Mr. Bevan's stomach had long ago grown cold; nay, he felt positively weak for want of breakfast, when the first signs of life appeared in Mr. Bailey's house: these took the form, first of a cat leaping out as though in panic from the area gate, and immediately afterwards the appearance of a young woman's head utterly incomplete in toilet, and, in everything save the sex and youth of its owner, repulsive. Next, two blinds were drawn up in a bedroom on the second floor. The window was thrown open; and for a little while nothing more of real importance occurred.

Within the house, Mr. Bailey's man Zachary had woken his master and had flooded the room with light.

"It is ten o'clock, sir," he said in his customary tone of mingled severity and deference.

"That's a lie," said Mr. Bailey, not moving his

head from the pillow, nor withdrawing it by one inch from beneath the bedclothes.

Zachary made no reply. He was accustomed to conversations of this kind. He made an unnecessary noise with the hot water, banged the furniture about, and then before leaving the room said :

"May I go out for the day, sir?" in a tone rather of menace than of inquiry.

"You can go at a quarter past ten—it must be nearly that now," chuckled Mr. Bailey with sleepy humour.

Mr. Bailey's man Zachary was annoyed to have been caught in this trap ; he consoled himself by remembering that he might leave the house at once and his master be none the wiser.

"If you're not back by six this evening," said Mr. Bailey good-naturedly, stretching his arms and yawning, "you'll be in the workhouse in a week or two."

"Very good, sir," said Zachary in a more respectful tone than he had yet adopted ; he shut the door very softly after him and went tiptoe down the deep carpet of the stairs. For the next ten minutes he was dressing as befitted a man of his temper, and well before ten o'clock he had emerged from the front door in a quiet, sensible frock-coat, a good but not obtrusive top hat, quite new gloves of a deep brown, and a serviceable but neat

umbrella. His boots, however, were laced, not buttoned; blacked, not polished.

Mr. Bevan's heart rose with a bound. His long vigil was ended! He permitted Zachary to turn the corner of Bruton Street into Berkeley Square, and then, gauging his pace at much the same as that set by this excellent domestic, he followed.

The error was not only natural, it was inevitable. It was no case for hesitation nor even for rapid decision; but even had such a necessity arisen in Mr. Bevan's mind, his habit of prompt decision would have saved him from even a moment's delay. He had found his quarry and he would hunt it down.

With the sober walk that denotes a man of the world, but now and then twirling his umbrella as though his birth and status gave him a right to despise convention, nay, going once or twice so far as to whistle the bar of a tune, Zachary proceeded northward to the Tube, and turned into that station which takes its name from Bond Street.

The Tubes of London have added yet another problem to the already arduous intellectual task of that great army of detectives which stands between Society and Anarchy. To follow a man in the street, to pursue his cab or his omnibus at the regulation distance advised by Captain Wattlebury, M. Grignan, and other authorities of European

reputation, is an easy matter ; but once let your man get into the train ahead of you on the Tube, and you have lost him ! The Tube necessitates, as all my readers who have engaged in detective work will recognise, a close proximity to the person watched ; but Mr. Bevan was equal to the occasion. Fully appreciating the strategical advantage of the stairs, he was at their foot long before the lift had reached the level of the trains, and following Zachary's tall hat through the crush, he sat down in the carriage next to that in which the scent lay, gazing into vacancy and sucking the top of his umbrella. Mr. Bevan watched him narrowly through a contrivance with which all the forces of law and order are familiar : a little book which can be easily held before the face as though one were reading, but which is pierced by a convenient hole through which the right eye can sweep the landscape beyond.

Zachary changed for Hampstead, and so did Mr. Bevan. At the junction he bought a newspaper, the name of which Mr. Bevan, to his great chagrin, was unable to note, as he folded it inside-out and read the lower half of the sheet. At Hampstead, I find it in Mr. Bevan's notes that they alit, and they reached the happy upper world together. Zachary made straight for the Heath. Mr. Bevan, now free to follow him at a discreet distance, did

so, but grew fainter and weaker as he walked, for he was in desperate need of food. He hoped and prayed that the chase would turn into a restaurant: his prayer was answered, though in a manner shocking to one who still maintained his respect for rank.

Zachary turned into a little public-house of an unpleasing type, nodded cheerfully to the potman, whom he addressed as "Larky," and ordered—of all things in the world—gin and water!

The accident was a godsend to Mr. Bevan. He noticed that his quarry had at least had the decency to go into the saloon bar; he dashed into the public one, gulped down a glass of beer, bought a handful of biscuits, went out immediately lest he should miss the trail, and was glad to see that his victim yet lingered within.

In twenty minutes or so he came out, his eyes a little watery, and continued his unsuspecting way towards the Heath with the detective after him. But he was not alone! By his side there walked, dressed in a manner that would have appalled the Press itself, a young woman!

The plot thickened. And Mr. Bevan, who had expected a very different occupation to be provided for him, divined at once the possibilities which his discovery contained. He had no need now to fear hunger, anxiety, or lack of matter. It was plain

sailing for the whole afternoon. He followed them to the Heath, he saw them seated and embraced behind a clump of thorn and ready to devour a luncheon they had purchased and carried in a paper bag. He would leave them now; he had time to return to the little public-house and to inquire of the potman every detail of the unhappy man's conduct; he was told of his monstrous promise to marry the daughter of the potman's master; of his repeated and lengthy calls; he learnt at full length the whole disgraceful business, and with admirable self-mastery he pretended to no surprise when he heard that the name the visitor was known to the publican and his servant by was "Zachary Hemmings." He waited patiently until the guilty man reappeared with his paramour in her father's home. He waited outside in the advancing dusk until the male offender had reappeared, somewhat unsteadily, and giving every sign of an exhilaration due to something more than requited affection. His hat was not absolutely straight upon his head; his umbrella trailed upon the ground; his face was indolently happy. Zachary did not take the Tube, but as it was now already dark and as he remembered in a fuddled way that his place was in jeopardy, he had the cunning to hail a lonely taximeter which was returning in no good humour after depositing a fare at the Spaniards.

There are in the humbler strata of our national life qualities of courage and immediate decision such as produce a Kitchener, a Milner, or a Macdonald in the higher ranks. A taximeter is the fleetest of all beasts: in Hampstead taximeters are rare. Mr. Bevan had decided in a flash. He dashed up, pulled off his hat, imitating with partial success the speech of a man out of breath with running, and told Zachary at top speed that if he would permit him to share his taximeter back to town he would be saving the life of a young child, of whose sudden accidental fall he had but just heard by telephone. The domestic, though perhaps not naturally warm-hearted, or if warm-hearted, rendered callous by years of exacting labour, was, under the combined influences which he had enjoyed, in a softer—nay, in an effusive mood. He seized Mr. Bevan's hands, swung him into the cab, shouted "Cer'nly!" and putting his head out of the window said to the astonished chauffeur, "Home!"

Before that mechanician had time to reply in suitable terms, Mr. Bevan had whispered through the little hole, "That's all right, Bond Street: tell you where to stop," and they darted away down the hill.

Zachary tried twice to sing, remembered each time that he was in company, smiled vapidly each time, and each time was silent again. But I

cannot deny that at Chalk Farm, quite forgetting the child whose unhappy accident was causing an agonised father to be his guest, he insisted on getting out and drinking—a course from which that agonised father made no attempt to dissuade him; he repeated his folly at the Horseshoe.

At the corner of Bond Street the taximeter pulled up abruptly. Mr. Bevan leaped out, and nodding hurriedly at the astonished Zachary who had a vague comprehension that some things were too well known, and other things too mysterious, he gave the number in Bruton Street to the chauffeur and disappeared. The taximeter swept round eight or nine corners, waited perhaps a quarter of an hour behind as many blocks in the traffic, and finally deposited the unhappy Zachary at his master's door.

The noise of the engine attracted that master to the ground floor windows of his study, and Zachary noted with alarm the vision of his face. His confused brain prepared a defence. The sum marked upon the taximeter was four and tuppence: he feared for one idiotic moment that it represented 42*s*. Recovering from his alarm he remembered to divide it by eight, which is the number of pence per mile commonly charged by these useful vehicles, failed to arrive at a quotient, pressed ten shillings into the chauffeur's hand, and was only too glad to

see him depart in the direction of Berkeley Square and of those wealthy regions to the West. The wretched man was fumbling with his latch-key for the keyhole, when he nearly fell forward inwards as the door was suddenly opened by Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey's face was genial, his eyes bright as ever, his whiskers as healthy and florid as though he had but just completed his morning toilet. With his hands in his pockets he looked down on his abashed servitor and said pleasantly:

"How drunk you are to-night, Zachary!" He then added as Zachary's hat fell to the floor: "I hope that's your hat, Zachary, and not mine!"

Zachary said "Yes, sir," with painful clarity of intonation.

"You come in here, Zachary," said Mr. Bailey, opening the door of the study. "I want to talk to you. Sit down in that chair, a long way from the fire."

Zachary did as he was bid: Mr. Bailey shut him in, went to the kitchen stairs and roared down them:

"Jane-bring-me-up-a-cup-of-very-hot-coffee-with-no-sugar-in-it-at-once-I-don't-want-to-be-kept-waiting-in-the-study!" For such was Mr. Bailey's method of delivering an order in person on the rare occasions when he put himself to that inconvenience. The consequence of that method was that

hardly had he joined Zachary in the study when Jane appeared, purple in the face, with a large cup of coffee which contained no trace of sugar, and which was extremely hot. The moment she was out of the room Mr. Bailey solemnly dropped a pinch of salt into the coffee and said to his miserable servant:

"Drink that!"

"I do assure you, sir—" said Zachary in tones of increasing sobriety.

"Drink that, you ass," said Mr. Bailey, "do you suppose I don't know what's good for you?"

"Yes, sir, certainly sir," said Zachary humbly. He gulped the coffee down, and when he had done so began: "It's not near seven, sir."

Mr. Bailey put up his hand.

"Now look here, Zachary," he said; "what I want is information. First of all, you came in a taxi' cab."

"Yes, sir, I did, sir," said Zachary. "I'm sure, sir, I wouldn't have——"

"I don't mind your coming home in a pumpkin with six white mice," said Mr. Bailey. "I don't want to know why about anything. What I want is information. Where did you come from?"

"'Ampstead, sir," said Zachary, who but rarely dropped his h's, but thought there were occasions when it was necessary to do so. Then forgetting

his master's injunction, he added: "But there was a gentleman, with me, sir."

"Oh," said Mr. Bailey, thoroughly interested. "That's what I wanted—information. You came in a taximeter (that I could see for myself). You came from Hampstead, you came drunk (I'm sure you won't mind my saying that!) and there was a gentleman with you. Now, who was that gentleman?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the bewildered Zachary.

"Good heavens!" replied Mr. Bailey. "Can't you remember where you met him?"

"It was coming out of my friend's father's house that is to be," said Zachary, with a precision rather of visual concept than of terminology.

"The Hop and Garters?" said Mr. Bailey, with vague reminiscence.

"No, sir," said Zachary, with as much severity as he had power under the conditions to assume. "The Hop Garden, sir; that's the name of the house, the Hop Garden."

"How had you passed your time till then?" asked Mr. Bailey.

Zachary recounted his day in no great detail, and in some fear lest his dignity should suffer as he told the story.

Mr. Bailey mused. To characters so wayward

and loose the solid plans whereby great men of affairs achieve their ends are at once inexplicable and tedious. Mr. Bailey had no conception of what was toward. He might even have been ready, had Zachary remembered the circumstance, to believe the story the detective told about a sick child and the necessity for speed. As it was, he was merely bewildered, and was filled with a sort of instinctive muddled conception that somehow or other it had been worth somebody's while to shadow Zachary as far as the top of Bond Street and no further. But why on earth should any one want to shadow Zachary? He thought of burglars, but burglars do not become intimate with servants by exciting their suspicions. He thought of practical jokes; he thought of petty theft, but Zachary assured him he was only ten shillings out, and even then remembered that he had given the ten shillings to the chauffeur.

While he was in this sort of study, making neither head nor tail of the adventure, Zachary volunteered, a little nervously, for he was afraid it might sound like an explanation and not like the "information" his master was after:

"I'm sure he was a gentleman, sir—he knew where you lived."

Mr. Bailey was quite seriously concerned. To men of his intellectual calibre, utterly unworthy to

compete with the great directing brains of our masterful time, and capable only of a superficial and purely verbal display, a sense of a force which knows *them* while they do not know *it*, is intolerable. Such men are the weak, hunted creatures of our powerful and creative generation—that is, when the hunt is worth the hunter's while. And the hunters —the successful hunters—are the financiers, the statesmen, the owners, the doers—the Hearsts, the Northcliffes, the Clemenceaus, the Roosevelts, the Levi Leiter Juniors—who make us what we are.

Mr. Bailey, who knew so little of reality, knew this at least, and with the instinct of all hunted things, he was troubled. He was much graver when he rose after this conversation and said:

"That's all right, Zachary, you'd better go to bed. Don't eat anything, and drink nothing beyond such cold water as you absolutely require. I'm sure it will be sufficient."

"I thank you humbly, sir," said Zachary. He went out of the room quite sober—such is the effect of coffee with a little salt—and crept up to bed.

Mr. Bailey remained for an hour and more gazing at the fire; then he rang the bell and ordered dinner with the most precise care, choosing just those articles which could be cooked lightly and quickly, insisting to the cook whom he saw in person, that

they should follow in a precise order and at precise intervals of time, and adding, as was his invariable custom after each item :

"If you haven't got it, send for it."

At half-past eight this repast was to be ready, and for him alone. He puzzled at Zachary's mysterious adventure for some moments and longer, could make nothing of it, and in order perhaps to relieve his uneasy sense of incapacity, took refuge in reading one evening newspaper after another, and passing upon each some silent, facile, cynical comment as he read.

Meanwhile Mr. Bevan had reported at Barnett House. He was at once admitted.

He found the aged statesman and philanthropist before the Adams chimney-piece, a mass of papers upon a what-not beside him, his telephone mobilised upon the great central table, and a pile of bank-notes standing by the side of it under a paper-weight of bronze representing the Ariadne of Knidos, a bust the poor Master of Kendale had especially admired.

Mr. Bevan stood waiting at the door. The Duke of Battersea with exquisite good breeding waved his aged hand towards a chair, but Mr. Bevan preferred to remain standing, and he was not pressed. He first broke the silence :

"I've done the job proper, my lord—your grace, I mean," he said ; "heavy, too."

"I ask you to tell me quite shortly what you have found," said the Duke, without lifting his eyes.

It was almost the same order that Mr. Bailey was giving to his servant at that same moment some two or three hundred yards away, but what a gulf between the two men! The strong and secure architect of his own and of his country's successes, sitting in the splendour of Barnett House, doing, controlling all—and the poor egoist whose feeble good-nature or vanity had been the chief feature of the interview in Bruton Street! Mr. Bevan told his story with precision, described the well-dressed gentleman leaving the house in Bruton Street; his disgraceful adventures in a lower rank; his assumed name of "Zachary Hemmings." The Duke asked the detective whether he were sure Mr. Bailey used that false name. Mr. Bevan said "Quite sure, your grace," and completed his tale with the story of the drunkenness, the taxi, and all the nasty business. When he had done he pulled out the piece of paper which had accompanied him throughout the day and to which he had added a few lines in the Bull and Flummery, on his way from Bond Street to Barnett House.

"I've got it all writ down here, sir—I mean your grace." (The Duke of Battersea made an impatient gesture—he could not bear to have his title insisted

upon.) "It's all here," repeated Mr. Bevan with legitimate pride.

"Give it me," said the Duke of Battersea quietly.

Mr. Bevan knew the world as well as a man can under his circumstances; he also was one of the strong girders of our State, not one of its painted ornaments; but when two generals meet the greater conquers. He handed over the paper quite innocently, and before he knew what had happened, the Duke of Battersea had put it in the fire; nay, with a vigour rare at his age and rarer still in men of his worldly possessions, he had thrust it among the coals with the toe of his boot.

Mr. Bevan could not restrain a movement towards it. He was too late to save it, then the reserve which the presence of the Great imposes upon us all recalled him to himself.

This brief episode over—and it did not take thirty seconds—the Duke of Battersea said in a rather louder, more vibrant tone than he had yet used:

"Thank you, Bevan, there iss your money"—he wagged his head towards the table. "You said you would not take it in a cheque; so: but I like to know where my money goes; and how also."

Mr. Bevan opened his mouth to speak.

"It is take it or leaf it," said the Duke of Battersea.

Mr. Bevan took it.

"I do think, sir . . ." began Mr. Bevan.

There passed suddenly over the Duke of Battersea's face an expression of such concentration and power as may have passed perhaps over that of another great genius * when he planned the Parliamentary fortunes of the Panama Canal and seemed for a moment thwarted. It was an expression of enormous intensity, and Mr. Bevan, putting the notes without counting them into a side pocket of his coat, and keeping his hand upon it, quietly left the room.

When he was gone the Duke of Battersea took a note which he had already written and was keeping against this moment, and sent it round the corner in a cab to the club where he knew that Fitzgerald was waiting upon that critical night before going back to the Plâs. The cab came back immediately with Charles Fitzgerald in it. Here at least was a man who understood haste. He was not even wearing a hat!

The Duke of Battersea rose to receive him—a rare honour, but he knew when to pay honour. He was affectionate to him, put one hand upon his shoulder, and asked him whether he would drink

* I refer once more to the (alas!) late Baron de Reinach, uncle of the great French statesman, Joseph de Reinach.

anything, which Fitzgerald very gladly did; and when Fitzgerald had drunk he said:

"Do you think you can bring Mr. Bailey at once here? Ah?"

"He'll be dining now," said Fitzgerald.

"He is dining alone to-night," said the Duke of Battersea, "he is not dining till half-past eight o'clock. It is twenty minutes only past seven o'clock." He knew these things.

He added a number of other details, stuffed with research, concentration, and plan, and Fitzgerald admired all he heard.

Fitzgerald waited a moment. "Mary Smith could get him," he said finally, thinking as he spoke and holding his head to one side. "I'll telephone to her and she'll telephone to him. Then she'll let me know, and I'll go and fetch him. I'm sure he'll come."

He bothered for no formalities but went out at once, for he knew what was wanted.

The time seemed very long to the Duke of Battersea. The moments were important. Fitzgerald was gone but twenty-five minutes, and when he returned the Duke was glad to hear two shambling footsteps accompanying Fitzgerald's own decided step down the marble of the passage.

And sure enough, there came in, half a head above the tall young man, the taller, somewhat hesi-

tating figure with its good-natured face, upon which could now be very palpably read a lack of ease.

The Duke of Battersea put out his hand, but Mr. Bailey was so awkward as to be occupied at that moment in blowing his nose. It was but one of many indications of the man's inward disturbance. Then he sat down, and behind him, without a word of comment or apology, Fitzgerald withdrew and was off to Mr. Clutterbuck's home.

When they were alone the Duke of Battersea said in a very gentle but very decided tone:

"Mr. Bailey, I think we know each other. I want to tell you a story. Will you listen out?"

"Listen what?" said Mr. Bailey, with his irritating verbal quibbles.

"Listen out to me," said the Duke of Battersea, certain of his idiom.

"Would I listen you out?" said Mr. Bailey.

"Yes," said the Duke of Battersea, still thoroughly master of himself.

"Go ahead," said Mr. Bailey. He leant back, put his hands into his pockets as though that drawing-room were the most familiar to him in the world, and surveyed the Duke of Battersea downward through half-shut eyes.

The old man began his tale. The wording of it was perfect, and if here and there a foreign idiom crept into his terse and carefully chosen phrases,

Mr. Bailey would murmur a correction. To such impertinences the Duke paid no attention. He told the story of a man who had left home that morning; he gave the precise hour at which he left home, the manner of his dress, and the very lace upon his boots. He told the whole shameful story of the Tube, of the Hop Garden—

"Hop and Garters," said Mr. Bailey quietly.

"So—well then," cried the Duke of Battersea, for one moment visibly angered, "laugh at last and you laugh best." Then he sank back into his own sense of power, recovered English idiom and continued. As he went on to the story of the Heath, and of the luncheon, Mr. Bailey rose and began pacing up and down the room. When the Duke came to the final visit to the public-house, to the name "Zachary Hemming," which he scanned slowly, hardening the gutturals in "Zachary" and filling that word with sting, Mr. Bailey sat down again, and before the Duke had concluded he had covered his face with his hands. But the old man was pitiless. He told the story of the excesses at Chalk Farm, of further excesses at the Horseshoe; he gave the very description of the mysterious stranger, of the taximeter—of all. Then he ceased.

There is always something of the Cad in the Fanatic. A gentleman would have warned the

aged Philanthropist of the error under which he laboured. Not so Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey's face was still hidden. A slight movement of the shoulders did not betray his emotion. There was a long interval of silence. Then the Duke said :

"Well, Mr. Bailey, now who laughs at last ?"

Mr. Bailey answered never a word.

"Mr. Bailey," continued the Duke, "I will do nothing, but so also you will nothing. No-thing," he added, pronouncing the word quite slowly, "nothing at all." He wagged his head gently, and permitted the slightest of smiles to greet Mr. Bailey's face as it rose from between his hands. "No-thing at all. That is all is there," he ended.

Mr. Bailey, with bowed head and with an inaudible sigh repeated, but in a lower tone, stunned as it were into repeating the very phrases and accent of his host, "No-thing at all—that is all is there."

And he went out without another word.

In this way the Duke of Battersea secured himself from danger, and he slept that night certain that the meeting would not be held. He had won his battle.

CHAPTER XIII

NEXT morning Mr. Bailey woke at dawn, a rare thing for him and an unpleasant one. He did not ring his bell : he hoped perhaps for further sleep, but he felt wonderfully wakeful. The morning was fresh ; he went and pulled aside the curtain, he threw open the window towards the day, and sniffed the eager air ; his mischievous brain was alert and full of plans ; he was seeking what he might devour.

In this mood there suddenly recurred to him the night before, and though he was alone he beamed to himself at the recollection of it. He first considered, in that minute manner to which such natures are given, how best he could reply, and in a little while he had decided.

He dressed and went out, ate his breakfast at a little workmen's chop-house in one of the back streets—where he was sufficiently stared at—and then walked smartly northward and eastward towards Mickleton, musing as he went, and with every step he took his plan grew more defined.

Of all the men of Mickleton, Mr. Clay, he found, carried most weight. His courage in starting business for a third time, his large number of workmen, the rates he paid, his Swedenborgianism, all counted in the suburb: he had paid Mr. Clay assiduous court for a fortnight, and Mr. Clay was delighted at the honour.

It was half-past nine when he found Mr. Clay in his office, strict and starched as ever, and, as ever, in some incomprehensible hurry to get on to the next affair.

"Clay," he said, "can you lend me the big shed to-night?"

"Yes," said Mr. Clay with the rapidity of decision that had already lost him one fortune and grievously jeopardised two others. "James," he said, turning round smartly, "book that. Mr. Bailey takes the big shed when the men knock off work."

"No, no!" broke in William Bailey, "not when the men knock off work. It's Saturday man! Half-past eight's the hour."

"Oh!" said Mr. Clay promptly. "James, book that: not when the men knock off work, half-past eight. Anything more?" he added, turning to Mr. Bailey as upon a swivel.

"Yes, Clay, certainly," said Mr. Bailey with deliberate hesitation. "Will the men come?"

"Of course they'll come. I'll tell them to come:

they'll come anyhow. James," he said, turning round again, "note that the men are to come."

The wretched James noted it.

"Anything more?" said Mr. Clay.

"Yes," said Mr. Bailey, "will you take the chair?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Clay. "James, remind me that I take the chair."

"How shall I remind you?" replied the terrified boy.

"How shall you remind me, you fool? Write it down—book it—make a note of it. Anything more?" he continued.

"No, I think that's about all," said Mr. Bailey. But as he turned to go slowly out Mr. Clay's curiosity got the better of his extremely business-like habits.

"Mr. Bailey," he said, coughing slightly, "Bailey, I beg your pardon, but what will the meeting be about?"

"Oh, what on earth does that matter?" said Mr. Bailey good-naturedly. "Just a meeting."

"About the unseating of our member?" asked Mr. Clay anxiously.

"Yes," answered Mr. Bailey with jollity, "all sorts of things of that sort."

"I'm your man," said Mr. Clay, "I'm your man. None of that about here: we're free born in Mickle-

ton, we are. Mickleton men," he added, as though Mickleton were an island that had fiercely defended its independence in long and bloody wars—"Mickleton men, Mr. Bailey." Then he nodded, and remembering the true secret of success, began writing rapidly again.

Mr. Bailey sauntered out. He looked about him to find his direction, turned down Mafeking Avenue, and when towards ten o'clock he had reached the agents for the Second Jubilee Hall and the Coronation Annexe, his foolish and disastrous intention was fixed.

He entered abruptly into his business and told the clerk that he must countermand the use of the building for that night. He was willing to pay the £40 for it as though he had hired it, and in case they could get another let at so short a notice, half that sum.

The clerk had been warned by his principal that Mr. Bailey would probably telephone or still more likely call in person that morning, and professed a need to consult the head of the firm before he could give a reply. He was careful to leave Mr. Bailey with a copy of the *Times* while he went into the principal's private room, and Mr. Bailey, who had not seen that paper for some months, gloomily read a leader upon foreign affairs, in which his warped judgment pretended to detect the hand of

the redoubtable and ubiquitous Abraham. He had not been engaged in this fashion for five minutes, when the clerk returned and told him in a firm voice they could not accept his offer.

"How do you mean you can't accept it?" demanded Mr. Bailey in very genuine astonishment and with still more genuine irritation. "You can't refuse it! . . . you mean you can't accept the £20?" he added a little more gently.

"Yes we can, sir—no I don't, sir," answered the clerk hurriedly and firmly, while his mouth twitched like that of a Colonial Governor in time of crisis. "I mean we can't accept it, sir, it can't be done."

"But it's got to be done," roared Mr. Bailey. "You can't force me to hold my meeting if I don't want to!"

"No, sir, certainly not, sir," said the clerk.

"Then what the hell do you mean?" shouted the blasphemous fellow.

"I mean that we can't take a plain inclusive payment for the loss and disturbance, sir. We can't do it."

"What *do* you mean?" said Mr. Bailey.

The clerk answered that he must consult his principal again, and Mr. Bailey, restraining himself with a considerable effort, sat down to finish the leader which he was more convinced than ever had proceeded from the pen of the mythical

Hebrew. It was a long while before the clerk returned, for it had been necessary to communicate by telephone with the Duke of Battersea, and at such an early hour it was not easy to obtain the philanthropist's reply.

"We'll take your offer, sir," said the clerk.

"Oh you will, will you?" said Mr. Bailey, "then you won't have the chance. I'll hold the meeting just the same. So there!" he added, a little vulgarly, and stalked out.

It is undecided, flighty action of this sort which leads to half the trouble in this world. Mr. Bailey had not the remotest intention of holding the meeting in the original hall. In that his somewhat wayward decision stood firm. With that object he had seen Mr. Clay; and he was wise, for the forces against him were too strong to permit him to call the meeting in the Second Jubilee Hall or even in the Coronation Annexe; they were strong enough to prevent his holding it in any public building. But this sudden rise of temper on his part proved a source of considerable irritation and expense to others, who should not have been made responsible for it.

The conversation that passed over the telephone, between the Duke of Battersea and the agent, was singularly and needlessly acrimonious upon the part of the aged statesman, almost servile upon the

part of the agent; both emotions might surely have been spared to two men who at heart knew themselves to be worthy of nobler things, had not Mr. Bailey, by his precipitate ill-temper, destroyed arrangements which would probably have been for his own good, and certainly for that of the community at large. The upshot of the conversation was that the Duke, despairing of understanding the situation, announced his intention of coming himself to Mickleton by noon, and the agent, pleased as he was at the advertisement that such a visit must afford him, would willingly have foregone the honour for the sake of that peace which he feared never to regain.

At noon the motor-car glode up with its tiny strawberry leaf coronet and the dainty arms upon the panels.

The agent came out, was obsequious, deferential, intelligent and full of sympathy, but unfortunately incapable of the rapid perception which was demanded of him. His only reply was that he could not see how he could do it; that he would do everything he could; he would be delighted to withdraw the placards which were even now being got ready to stand outside the hall; he would make what difficulties he could for the admission of the Press—though he very much doubted his power to exclude reporters once the

hall was hired. When, in the midst of his excuses, he suddenly let light into his caller's mind by saying:

"And of course everything would be subject to the proprietors."

"Who are then the proprietors?" said the Duke sharply.

"The Anglo-Saxon Exchange," said the agent with that touch of pride which we all feel when we mention any important power with which we have even a distant connection.

The Duke was relieved.

"That I should also have known," he said gently, and then changing his manner altogether he added:

"That is *allright*, that is *allright*," separating the first two words and laying stress upon the first syllable of the last, in a manner which still faintly betrayed those difficulties with the English language which he had had the courage and the perseverance to conquer almost completely.

He went away in a frame of mind at which the agent was at once too polite and too humble to wonder, but which was certainly far less agitated than that in which he had come. It was a heavy strain to fall upon a man of the Duke of Battersea's age, and one that should have been spared him, but no one knew better than that strong genius of

finance what things may be done by deputy and what things must be done in person. Nor will any of my readers regret that the old man's investigation should have left him freed of the fears which the vicious and unpatriotic conduct of an irresponsible eccentric had aroused.

A little after lunch Mr. Kahn, the secretary of the Anglo Saxon Exchange, happened to drop in at the agent's in Mickleton. There was nothing unexpected in the visit. His few questions turned upon the usual topics, whether the hall had recently let well, who had taken it, whether the more disturbed political meetings had done any damage, whether it was now worth applying for a licence, &c. It occurred to him to ask, just as he was going away, when the hall was likely to be let next, and to whom, as there were certain reparations which the architect for the estate had decided upon.

The reappearance of this terrible subject once more disturbed the restored equanimity of the agent.

"Oh, dear," he said, "it's let—in a manner of speaking."

"What's in a manner of speaking?" said the astonished secretary.

"Well, a gentleman's got it anyhow, and then he didn't want it, and now he wants it again."

"Oh nonsense!" said Mr. Kahn, "we can't play

the fool with the County Council. The platform's declared unsafe ; we must have the workmen come in. I thought there were several days to do it in and I wasn't in any hurry, but it certainly can't be done in a couple of hours. You'll have to tell your man he can't have it."

The appearance of this further complication almost drove the wretched agent mad. Excusing himself for perhaps the fifth time that day and rushing to the telephone he called up Mr. Bailey and entreated him to cancel the engagement. But Mr. Bailey was in a dour mood, and as he sat indulging in his habitual excess of port after a solitary lunch, he darted into his receiver the most positive and vicious refusal, saying plainly that if his rights were tampered with he would sue for damages.

The agent came back with the substance, though not with the expletives of this reply, and the secretary of the Anglo-Saxon Exchange, pulling out his watch, said briefly :

"Well, there's no help for it. We must send in the workmen at once, and if he wants to sue he can sue."

In an hour a considerable body of healthy but somnolent men slouched into the building, their chief showed his written orders, and the remainder of the afternoon was spent in removing benches, opening up the floor, barricading the door, cutting off

the electric light from the main (nothing is more dangerous than to leave such connections during repairs), digging a deep trench in front of the back entrance, and in other ways setting about improvements that were doubtless necessary, but that would make it highly inconvenient for any considerable body to gather within for political or for any other purposes.

The agent, after repeated conversations with Mr. Bailey, each more conciliatory than the last, promised and despatched a cheque for £25 on the distinct understanding that no proceedings should follow; and when the agent had recovered this sum (as he did with difficulty) from the Anglo-Saxon Exchange, the expenses of that great financial corporation, in labour and in compensation, were, I regret to say, considerably over £100.

Mr. Bailey, seated by his lonely but warm and brilliant hearth, held the cheque for £25 daintily between his finger and thumb. For a moment it seemed as though he would have put it in the fire, then with the subtle smile of the fanatic, he thought better of the business; he endorsed the cheque and sent it, with a Latin motto pinned on, to a Jew-baiting organisation in Vienna; a foul gang of which he knew nothing whatsoever save that he had read its address in one of those vile Continental rags from which he derived so many of his prejudices,

and whose authority was the origin of his repeated falsehoods.

* * * * *

It had been arranged that Mr. Clutterbuck should pick up Mr. Bailey on the way, just upon eight o'clock, and drive him to the hall.

He had been late so often that Mr. Bailey was expecting some delay, but when the quarter had struck, he grew anxious ; and at twenty past he would wait no longer. He had the good luck to get a taxi at the corner of the square, but even so he would be late. He began to have doubts, and as he dashed up northwards to Mickleton those doubts in that diseased brain of his rapidly became certainties. Mr. Clutterbuck had been nobbled : Mr. Clutterbuck would not appear. Asleep or ill, or overturned in some ditch, or accidentally locked up in some room, the ex-Member for Mickleton would not be in Mickleton that night. Such were the wild fancies which formed in the fanatic's imagination. The truth was simple and needed no such extravaganza of melodrama as William Bailey concocted within himself.

Charlie Fitzgerald had had the curiosity to stroll into the old constituency that morning ; he had come back to the centre of town from Mickleton by two. He had had lunch, of course, with the Duke of Battersea, who depended every day more

and more upon the young fellow's conversation and wit. Mr. Bailey's latest insanity, which Charlie Fitzgerald happened to have heard of during his visit to Mickleton in the morning, was naturally touched upon in their conversation; they laughed at the cunning which had hired Mr. Clay's shed, and they discussed the chances of the extempore meeting, but the happy young Irishman was not without a sense of duty; he would not leave his employer unaided, nor did the Duke of Battersea press him too eagerly to remain.

By half-past four, therefore, he was back at The Plâs, ready with his cheery voice to give Mr. Clutterbuck energy for the evening's business. He suggested a run round in one of the motors before going straight into town; there was a fine heartening wind from the south-west, with heavy clouds; it was just the afternoon to take an hour or two of the air before turning in after dark to London and duty. The suggestion was excellent, as were most of Charlie's suggestions, and Mr. Clutterbuck, carefully rolling up the speech that Mr. Bailey had written for him, and thrusting it into his breast pocket, put on his great fur coat and gloves, and ordered one of the smaller cars to come round.

"Nothing braces one up like a sharp bit of motoring before a speech," said Mr. Clutterbuck, as he got into the open Renault.

Charlie Fitzgerald was occupied in hauling away at the barrel organ in front of the radiator. He made faces as he did so.

Mr. Clutterbuck was rubbing his hands nervously and glancing at the sky.

"It looks dark," he went on, still rubbing his hands, "but I dare say nothing will come of it."

Charlie Fitzgerald, with a face more hideous than any yet drawn, gave a final tug at the starting handle and the machine began to throb. He jumped up by Mr. Clutterbuck's side and steered slowly past the lodge into the Croydon Road, while Mr. Clutterbuck kept on harping at his side upon the advantages of a sharp spin before a speech, and the doubtfulness of the weather. They fell into the main road and turned sharply to the left.

"Taking us far afield?" said Mr. Clutterbuck cheerfully. Nothing pleased him more than the experience of his secretary in the driving of a car. "Godalming, eh?"

Charlie Fitzgerald spoke for the first time:

"Something of that kind," he said. "Just a long run. . . . We'll go further than Godalming; we'll go right away round, and come into town from the north and west by the Harrow Road. It's much better like that; we won't get any of the slums. Let's eat somewhere in the country."

Mr. Clutterbuck was delighted. His honest old soul and his still more honest old stomach could not quite forget the honest old hours of high teas and a snack later on.

They shot round the base of the hills, missed a child in Dorking, ran into Guildford, had a splendid zizz along the Hog's Back, and then turned sharp round on to the Frimley Road, passed Penny Hill, and on towards Virginia Water. By the time they reached Staines it was dark.

All the way Mr. Clutterbuck had spoken with increasing joy, and Charlie Fitzgerald, in spite of his interest in the driving, had been very human to him. Now the dark had fallen, however, it was necessary that he should keep silence while he picked his way across country towards Harrow.

The turnings were bewildering, but Mr. Clutterbuck very properly trusted to his guide, and when about half-past six he had not yet perceived the first gas lights of a London street, he only asked quite casually whereabouts they were.

Charlie Fitzgerald answered with perfect straightforwardness that they must be somewhere near North Holty and Pinner by the look of the lanes, and he would take the next turning to the right; it would put them into Bruton well before eight, but they would have no time for more than a snack on the way. The next turning to the right

he duly took and then for many miles the road appeared to lead through a maze of turnings until they found themselves steadily ascending. On the right and the left were silent woods of beech, and there was no light for miles around. It was long past 7 o'clock, and Mr. Clutterbuck was seriously alarmed.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Fitzgerald," he said—it was not often that he had remonstrated in all these months—"I beg your pardon, but are you quite certain where you are?"

Then for the first time Charlie Fitzgerald confessed that he was not absolutely certain; he could not possibly, he said, be far from Rickmansworth, even if he had gone quite out of his way, and the best thing they could do was to send a telegram from the next telegraph office and to ask their way.

As he thus spoke, he suddenly slackened speed at a turn in the road and began a steep descent which lasted for over a mile. One five minutes and another went by; there was no sign of a house. At last a light showed far off to the left of the road.

Fitzgerald pulled up, leapt out with zeal, and came back with the information that they were at Postcombe, and so far as he could make out from the rustics who were singularly dull, the next post

office was a mile or two down the road; they were on the right line for London, but it would be another eighteen miles.

The post office was there right enough, and Fitzgerald went in and sent a telegram; then he took his seat again and drove through the night.

Mile after mile went by and there was no sign of men.

At Mr. Clutterbuck's age this kind of thing is dangerous; the lack of food told upon him; the anxiety told upon him still more. He worried Fitzgerald with continual questions; when they would be in; what direction they were following; whether he could perceive any glimmer of London before them.

To these questions his secretary only replied by nervous jerks of the head as he drove on straight through the darkness. His anxiety was betrayed by the forward bend of his body and the anxious tightening of his brows. He had hoped, perhaps, before he had sent the telegram to be in time. That was now past praying for, but they might at least turn the confusion of the meeting into a success if only they could make the lights of London by nine. He pushed the car to its utmost limits of speed, careless of the thick blackness and of the perpetual windings of the lanes which he followed with singular confidence.

They passed over a railway line, but there was no station in sight; they went on and passed another in the same fashion, then a broad river.

At last the motion showed them they were taking yet another long hill. There was no hedge upon either side, open fields, down; and a bitter wind driving across them filled the night. It was even too dark to perceive more than the ghosts of the clouds, when, at what seemed the loneliest part of this lonely countryside the machine stopped suddenly, and Charlie Fitzgerald, in a voice of weary despair, muttered half to himself and half to his companion:

"If it's the king-bolt, we're done!"

He took one of the lanterns from the front of the car, put it down upon the ground where it would illumine the complicated works beneath, and lying flat upon his back on the road, he began to inspect the damage. Mr. Clutterbuck, stooping anxiously with hands on knees, interrogated him from time to time, but received only disjointed replies in which king-bolts, the differential, the clutch and Beeton's Patent played a confused part.

After some few minutes of this investigation Charlie Fitzgerald re-appeared, replaced the lamp, and said in a solemn manner:

"We're cooked!"

It began to snow.

If Mr. Clutterbuck had had the slightest idea where he was, his dolour might have been to that amount relieved. He had none. He looked at his watch by the acetylene flare and found that it was nearly ten o'clock. The monotony of their misfortune was relieved by the approach of a horse and cart, and they learned from the driver at last the full extent of their misfortune. They had the choice, it seemed, of two resting-places that night, equally distant, one was Stow-in-the-Wold; and the only consolation the situation could offer them was the certainty that their car had done very well to cover such a distance in such weather in such a time. For the rest, eight miles in the dark was not a pleasing prospect, and Charlie Fitzgerald was moved to make one more attempt at reviving the car.

To Mr. Clutterbuck's astonishment the able young fellow succeeded this time within a very few moments. They continued the main road and reached their inn a little before eleven.

* * * * *

Meanwhile in London the meeting had, indeed, pursued a course Mr. Clutterbuck did not in the least desire.

CHAPTER XIV

NEXT to Mr. Clay's great shed there was an office which during the daytime served for the time checker. It was used that night as the ante-room to the meeting.

Small as it was, some twenty or thirty of the greater people of Mickleton had crowded into it, and more were coming of those who were to occupy the platform upon this decisive night. But though the hour of half-past eight approached, struck, and went past, Mr. Clay was increasingly anxious to observe that no Mr. Clutterbuck was there. With this exception, all the arrangements he was sure had been businesslike, practical, and thorough, but he could not conceal it from himself that no amount of organising power could make up for the absence of the ex-Member, whom the vast crowd had come to hear ; and in his heart he laid that absence down to the irresponsibility and wayward temperament of William Bailey ; he noticed also the absence of Mr. Fitzgerald.

In the great shed next door the audience were

beginning to stamp their feet, and there were sounds as though their impatience might be dangerous, but Mr. Clay dared not proceed.

Just at the moment when his own patience was breaking, and when he had determined to take the platform at any risk and to carry off the meeting as best he could, Mr. William Bailey swished up in his taximeter, stepped out of it with perfect and exasperating coolness, elbowed his way through the little crowd to Mr. Clay and said :

"Well, Clay, he hasn't turned up, and I don't think he will."

Let those who have the power to construct new words discover one to describe Mr. Clay's interior emotions at the news. The words he used were these :

"I don't understand. Why not ? Whose fault is that ? Something must be done ! You can't do that sort of thing. I do wish it hadn't happened. I'm not a rich man, but I'd give £5 ! We ought to wait ! I really can't conceive—I do wish !" and one or two other pronouncements of the same sort which betrayed not only in their phraseology but in their tone, an alarming perturbation. His face wore a look of intense suffering, and he was in no way calmed by the intermittent roars proceeding from an audience which had now waited over half an hour, and in many of

whom enthusiasm was already fermenting into anger.

The larger body of influential people who were to have supported the ex-Member for Mickleton upon the platform were to the full as anxious as their Chairman. Only Mr. Bailey appeared to regard the accident with complete calm. He answered the agitated Clay by suggesting a short excursion on to the platform and an explanation to the audience that their hero had been kidnapped.

Mr. Clay's voice rose as high as a woman's :

"*He's been kidnapped!*" he screamed.

"No, no, no," said Mr. Bailey, "I didn't say he'd been kidnapped. I said 'let's go and tell the audience he's been kidnapped!' I don't know what's happened to him, and neither do you nor anybody else. Perhaps he's dead; perhaps his motor's broken down. Perhaps he made a mistake about the hour. Perhaps he's gone mad. It's no good speculating; the point is to prevent a riot."

As he said this the noise within the hall grew so like that of a herd of wild bulls that Mr. Clay was spurred to yet further activity.

"But you can't go and tell them an untruth," he said, almost crying as he said it. ". . . Oh, let's go in and hold the meeting," he added, and then concluded with the apparently irrelevant words: "I'm a business man and I like business ways."

Mr. Bailey acceded as he would have acceded to any other misfortune, and the whole troop of them came tramping in, following Mr. Clay up the rough, improvised steps on to the platform.

The appearance of these notables solemnly filing in and taking their chairs soothed for a moment the angry mass below, but they looked in the procession for the dome-like forehead and the crescent moustache of a Clutterbuck: neither were there. Mr. Bailey watched the seething audience kindly through his spectacles, and marvelled at the numbers who had come.

There must have been over five thousand men present; the furthest recesses of the great shed were crowded with lads and young labourers standing upon the benches the better to follow the speeches, and packed as close as herrings, and a big mob outside was even now struggling at the doors. It was fearfully hot and close, and at the back a woman had fainted. He feared for the result.

Mr. Clay whispered to him hurriedly, but Mr. Bailey was observed to shake his head. Then Mr. Clay was seen to turn to Mr. Alderman Thorne and urge—perhaps implore—his aid: that gentleman ponderously rose to speak. His voice was deep and resonant: his gestures large. He reminded his hearers of many things: that English freedom was at stake, that their ancestors had torn up the railings

in Hyde Park, and that the spirit of Cromwell still lived. Then next, as he had been hurriedly advised, he suggested that they should sing that great new song and hymn which expressed their determination and their hopes.

As yet no one moved. He recited the first verse and begged them with religious enthusiasm to sing it when he had completed the opening words:

"The Lion, the Lion, his teeth are prepared,
He has blown the loud bugle, his sabre is bared."

Kipling's magnificent words brought a dozen to their feet; a few more were thinking of rising; a woman's voice had already begun, somewhat prematurely, *"The Lion . . ."* in a high treble, when a large, bearded man, with a fearless face and an appearance of fixed determination sprang up in the body of the meeting and said with a rich North country burr:

"Mrrr. Chairrman."

The others looked about them and sat down. The woman's treble piped away into nothing, and the North Countryman, still standing huge, said again much more loudly:

"MR. CHAIRMAN!"

This simple remark elicited on every side large shouts of "You're quoite roight! Don't give wye," and other encouraging expressions.

"Mr. Chairman," said the stranger for the third time, when their cries subsided, "before we hear this gentleman or sing yonder, perr-haps you'll tell us why ourr Memberr is not heerr?"

Mr. Clay, who was smiling pleasantly during this episode, and moving his feet with great rapidity to and fro under the table to relieve the tension of his nerves, was about to reply when the stranger, as is the custom of plain straightforward men in the poorer ranks of society, proceeded to speak at some length in support of his query; and Mr. Clay was too much pleased with such a respite to call him to order. The honest fellow pointed out, under various heads, not without rhetorical embellishments, and with considerable movement of the right arm, what the constituency had a right to expect, what was and what was not an insult to working men, and continually measured the circumstances of the evening by the fixed standards of what one gentleman has a right to expect from another. He was repeatedly cheered, and his Christian name, embellished with endearing epithets, was called out more than once in lively accents.

When he had sat down, and before Mr. Clay, who was half on his feet, could reply, another and totally different being in quite another quarter of the room, rose to make what he affirmed was a very different protest, but one which, in the course of his making

it, turned out to be nearly identical with the first which had been heard.

Then at last Mr. Clay had his chance and was free to observe, to loud cries of "Speak up!" and other less complimentary commands, that the occasion was one in which a little patience——

It was at this precise moment that an orange, fired with incredible rapidity, whizzed past the speaker's head and broke with considerable force upon the mantled shoulder of Mrs. Battersby.

"If that was one of my men ——" shouted Mr. Clay—but he got no farther. To the protests which were now rising from the greater part of the audience, were added inconsequent songs raised by mere rowdies, and to add to the confusion a free fight began in the south-eastern corner of the room between two gentlemen who were of the same opinion, but of whom each had completely misunderstood the attitude of the other upon the subject to which the evening was to have been devoted. The diversion afforded by this conflict attracted a larger and a larger number of champions upon both sides, and suddenly, for no apparent reason and prompted only by that brutish instinct which will often seize upon a mob when it gets out of hand, a considerable body of the electors resentbroke and surged towards the Platform.

The Platform in its turn attempted to go out, but

the single door of issue so considerably impeded their determined efforts that their rear, if I may so express myself, was hopelessly outflanked by their assailants long before the communications of the retreat had been properly organised. It cannot be denied that Mr. Alderman Thorne made a good fight of it for a man of his age and dimensions, and at the very moment when Mrs. Battersby, emitting piercing shrieks, was being squeezed sideways through the door, he was observed planting his fist with some vigour into the face of one of his own colleagues whom he had mistaken for the enemy.

Mr. Clay, who was quite unused to other combat than that of religious debate, improvised a defence with a chair, the legs of which he pushed back and forth rapidly with such considerable effect as to permit him to abandon his post almost the last and without a wound.

As for Mr. Bailey, he took refuge in his mere height; he retreated somewhat to the back of the platform, stood up, surveyed the swaying tangle of struggling men. He was pleased to note that the sound tradition which forbids men of inferior reach and weight to engage in coarse physical contest, spared him the active exertions necessary to so many of his friends. When he saw, or thought he saw, that the last of these as they backed towards

the door were in danger of ill-treatment, he elbowed his way without much resistance in their direction, and with some good humour pushed aside the first rank of their assailants.

Meanwhile the platform was completely covered with the victorious band who had stormed it; the moment was propitious for the entry of the police, who had been telephoned for from the ante-room; ten of these stalwart fellows marched in with military precision, and by their vigorous efforts prevented any further ingress to the platform which they erroneously supposed they had come in time to defend.

Mr. Bailey, shuffling out into the street in the midst of his still heated neighbours, thought it would be entertaining to approach the main door and to hear the opinion of the electorate. He was not disappointed. When the last of them had come out and when he had managed to explain himself to the police, who were all for making him their unique prisoner, he walked slowly homewards, meditating upon the forces of the modern world and imagining doubtless a hundred hare-brained theories to account for the very simple accident which had befallen the unfortunate Clutterbuck. To his diseased mind there seemed no third explanation beyond kidnapping and blackmail; and when he considered the shortness of the time avail-

able for the discovery of Mr. Clutterbuck's foibles, his futile judgment had determined *à priori* and without a shadow of proof, that as Mr. Clutterbuck could not have been blackmailed, Mr. Clutterbuck had been spirited away.

* * * * *

Next morning, between eleven and twelve, William Bailey lay in bed amusing himself by reading for once a whole batch of Sunday papers, for all of which he had just despatched Zachary to a large agent.

The ridiculous fellow was drawing up a memorandum, annotated with queries and remarks of the most fantastic kind, upon the names of the proprietors, the careers of the editors and the reasons each might have for giving his particular version of the affair. He noted what percentage mentioned the meeting at all; the adjectives used with regard to each: the motives ascribed to its promoters and to the indignation of the audience. The fact that the *Observer* had no space to mention the ridiculous bagarre he put down, as my readers may well imagine, to some dark and mysterious conspiracy connected with the Hebrew people. The fact that of those who mentioned it only two alluded vaguely to the Ruby Mines and none to the Duke of Battersea he ascribed, of course, not to the very natural reason that these details could not

concern the general public, but to what he was pleased to term "corruption." And altogether his disappointment at the result of the evening before, though it was a result which he had more than half expected, was amply made up for by his perverted pleasure in the contemplation of that next morning's Press.

He was in such a mood and ready for any false assumption or for any wicked slander, when a telegram was brought him. He opened it. It was from Stow-in-the-Wold; it begged Mr. Bailey to explain if possible and to make things right if it was not too late. Unfortunately within the narrow limits of such a message it was impossible to give the nature of the accident that had happened, and William Bailey's most foolish suppositions were only the more confirmed.

* * * * *

Sunday is not a good day for getting about. Mr. Bailey estimated things, and rightly judged that the motor-car, forlorn in those far Cotswold Hills, would be in no mood to return the eighty miles to town, and he saw that the trains of a Sunday were not the most convenient.

He let it stand till Monday, but that evening a figure worn with travel and shaken with unusual experience appeared before him. It was the figure of Mr. Clutterbuck.

He recited the adventure at large; he had not dared look at the Sunday papers; he had come because he could not rest until he had heard news of the dreadful affair. He was almost incoherent in his rapidity. Charlie was back at the Plâs; he had seen Mrs. Clutterbuck a moment—he had not told her. How had the constituency taken it, oh how had they taken it?

"Like a lot of animals," said William Bailey with vivid memories of the night, "and not quiet animals either; like a lot of wolves," he said.

Mr. Clutterbuck was heart-broken. "Couldn't something——" he began.

"Oh, *no!*" said William Bailey, really put out by the futility of the phrase that was coming. "No! Nothing! It's all over. When you're defeated, retreat in good order—keep your train intact. *We're* defeated all right!" Then he had the absurd irrelevance to add: "Come into the House with me on Tuesday?"

"But I'm not a member now," gasped Mr. Clutterbuck.

"Oh, I mean under the gallery, just to look at it," said William Bailey impatiently. "I'm not a member now either, thank God! It's one of the few things they can't force on a man nowadays." Such indeed is the cynical attitude of too many men who secretly know their own failure, and whom

bad tactics, or more frequently adverse majorities, have driven from the House of Commons.

Mr. Clutterbuck mournfully consented. He felt that impulse which the bereaved know so well, and which leads the widower to the freshly covered grave.

Upon Tuesday Mr. Bailey obtained for him the magnificent spectacle of the opening of Parliament. Mr. Clutterbuck heard the King's Speech, saw the peers in their robes, aye, and the peeresses too, and was glad to remember that there was one institution at least of a greater splendour than that to which he might now never attain.

As they went out, Mr. Bailey said, *à propos* of nothing : "Sack Charlie."

"Mr. Fitzgerald . . . Why on earth ?" said Mr. Clutterbuck with an open mouth.

"Well, don't if you don't like : I won't interfere. "Lunch to-morrow ?"

"Yes," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "certainly."

"Right," said Mr. Bailey, "and we'll get under the gallery."

In the train Mr. Bailey's advice echoed, and echoed ill in the merchant's ears, but he had not been in the house ten minutes when he heard Charlie Fitzgerald's happy voice calling him, and begging for congratulations.

Any vague suspicions that might have passed

through his mind were instantly dispelled, as he told the news—but he told it, protesting his willingness to continue his services if Mr. Clutterbuck desired to retain them. If he were free, however, Charlie had the option of a post in India.

His face was glorious with anticipation.

"In the Civil Service?" said Mr. Clutterbuck innocently.

"No," answered Charlie with nonchalance, "in some works out there, a sort of company; but I shall like it. It's mining, you know; it puts me right to the top at once."

"You'll do well," said Mr. Clutterbuck, wringing his hand with more familiarity than he had yet shown, and remembering as a business man must, the splendid organising power that lay behind the Irish ease of the Daniel-Daniels-Fltzgeralds.

Next day Mr. Bailey and Mr. Clutterbuck were watching the first working day of the Session of 1912:—what thoughts passed through the merchant's mind were much too deep for words as he noted one face after another so long familiar to him in the comic journals, and heard, under the disguise of their constituencies, names that shook the world. The wit, the intelligence, the judgment, the rhetoric overwhelmed him, and there were two tears in his eyes as he looked.

He heard one timid supplementary question on the Anapootra Ruby Mines, the thunderous cries for order that met it, and the sharp rebuke from the chair: then suddenly William Bailey moved from his side—he had seen the young Prime Minister, flushed with glory, but touched as it seemed with fatigue, go out for a moment behind the Speaker's chair. He said to Mr. Clutterbuck, "I'll be back in a moment," and he went off hurriedly through the lobbies.

William Bailey had one more task before him, and for once it was innocuous. He passed through the well-known corridors to the Prime Minister's room, opened the door without knocking, nodded to the secretary, and went in.

There are wearinesses in the common desert of political life, and an exception to its tedium, however anomalous or eccentric, will prove at some moments refreshing. The young Prime Minister was really glad to see the tall and absurd figure striding into the room, and he said: "Good old Bill!" with an accent of earlier times. Then he put his forearm squarely on the big official table, and before William Bailey could speak, with his firm, half-smiling lips he said:

"It'll save you trouble, Bill, to know that whatever it is I'm not going to do it."

"That's a pity," said William Bailey, "for the first

thing I was going to ask was whether you'd come to the Follies on Friday."

The Prime Minister was hugely relieved. "There's no one else in London, Bill, who comes into this particular room to ask that particular kind of question."

"Oh?" said Mr. Bailey thoughtfully. "By the way," he went on, "there's another thing; old Clutterbuck's got to have it."

"Oh, damn and blast old Clutterbuck," said the Prime Minister, jumping up from his chair as some men do when they see a black cat. "Oh, it's perfectably intolerable! Whether it's Charlie, or whether it's Mary, or whether it's Bozzy, or whether it's you, you shoot out that word 'Clutterbuck' the moment you've got the range. The only man in London who has the decency to spare me Clutterbuck is the Peabody Yid."

"*Et pour cause*," said Mr. Bailey, who spoke French but rarely.

The Prime Minister began to smile, then checked himself.

"I don't think it can be done, Bill," he said gently. "He's out of the way, I know, but it really would be too ridiculous. What would people say?"

"They wouldn't say anything," said Mr. Bailey, "they never do say anything, and it has its advantages, you know: a friend's a friend and an enemy's

an enemy; he's dreadfully sore just now. Besides which, what harm does it do a soul to give the poor chap a hoist? What harm did it do any mortal soul even when the Peabody Yid bought his peerage? And *he* bought the right to make interminable speeches with a lisp. I remember your father about him years ago: he was a godsend to your father in the Lords; your father could do the Yid better than any one in London."

Mr. William Bailey indulged in an imitation of the lisp, and the Prime Minister, who also remembered his father's intense amusement, was melted to another smile. He half gave way.

"The trouble is to find the recognition, you know," he said, "'in recognition'—in recognition of what? It's like the despatches from South Africa when they had to stick in every man Jack of them, or never dine again. But it's easier to give a D.S.O. because the public aren't there looking on. What the devil has old Clutterbuck ever done?"

"Oh," said Mr. Bailey gaily, "he declared strongly against allowing the fall in Consols to go on, and in favour of a large gold reserve, and one or two other things." Mr. Bailey looked the Prime Minister straight in the eye, and the Prime Minister's eye fell.

He took a pen and began drawing on the blotting-paper before him. "Do suggest something," he murmured.

There was a long silence.

"In recognition of his active services and labours in connection with the Royal Caterham Valley Institute," said Mr. Bailey at last.

"What on earth's that?" asked the Prime Minister, looking up blankly.

"We—ll, it doesn't exist—yet," said William Bailey, "but it will, you know, it will."

"I don't mind," said the Prime Minister wearily, "but it can't be before Easter."

"Well, now I'll tell you," said William Bailey by way of finale; "you write me a little note so that the poor fellow can be certain of Empire Day, and you will have done a really good deed."

"I can trust you, Bill?" said the young man anxiously. (How human they are!)

"Oh yes," said Mr. Bailey, "I'll give you a hostage."

He wrote out a few words on a slip of paper, signed it, and handed it over to his relative.

The Prime Minister took it with a funny little laugh and threw it into the fire.

"Don't be a fool, Bill," he said. "Of course I can trust you."

He wrote on a sheet of notepaper:

"MY DEAR MR. BAILEY,

"*I can well understand, but, as you will easily see, it is impossible before Empire Day. I have, however, received commands upon the matter with regard to that date, and I trust Mr.*——"

"Empire Day's in the season, isn't it?" he added anxiously.

"At the beginning of the season," replied William Bailey solemnly, "just before the middle class begin marrying into the plutocracy."

"You're quite right," said the Prime Minister seriously, "only I wanted to get the date more or less right. One must have time, and there's going to be a list on Empire Day—anyhow it's after Easter"—then he went on writing.

"What's the name?" he said in the middle of his writing.

"The name," said Mr. Bailey, "was to be Percy, I think—yes, Percy."

"*Mr. Percy Clutterbuck*," the Prime Minister went on writing, "*will accept your assurance and will use every discretion in the matter.*" He wrote a few more lines and signed. "There," he said, handing it over.

"You're a very good fellow," said William Bailey, taking the note and putting it carefully into a

monstrous old-fashioned wallet. "I'll send it back to you within a week—not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith."

As he said this the Premier's secretary came in with the unpleasing news that the deputation had come to time.

William Bailey hurriedly went out by the little private side door which he knew so well.

* * * * *

It was not until Mr. Bailey had successfully persuaded Mrs. Clutterbuck herself of the interest taken in the Highest Quarters in the Royal Caterham Valley Institute that he dared show that little note to her husband; but she—indomitable soul!—willingly accepted the opportunity at which he hinted. The bazaar was held, subscriptions gathered, Patronage of the most conspicuous sort received, the first stone of the Institute was laid with many allusions to the approaching festival of Anglo-American goodwill. William Bailey had long returned that dangerous little letter, and on that day which is now the chief festival of our race, when so many and such varied qualities receive their high rewards, the storm-tossed spirit of Sir Percy Clutterbuck was at rest.

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